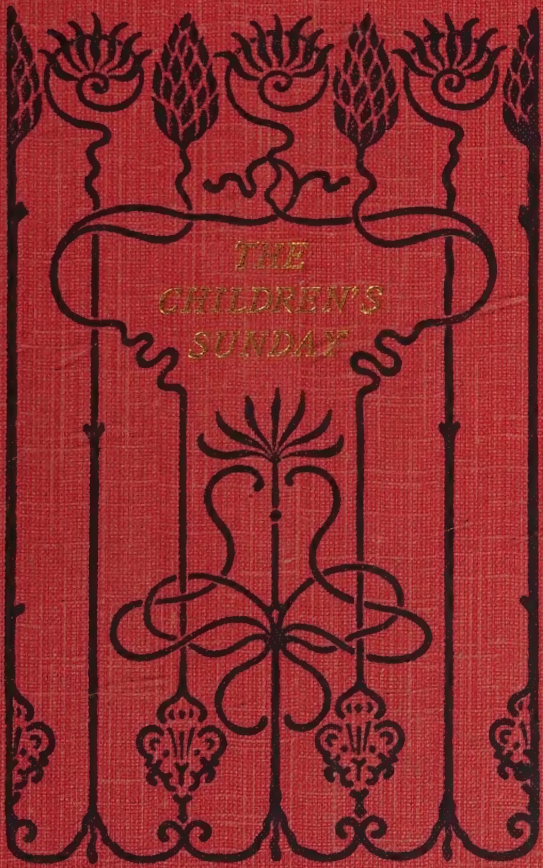
OBJECT ADDRESSES



By the Rev. A. HAMPDEN LEE

THE CHILDREN'S SUNDAY

OBJECT ADDRESSES

FOR CHURCH, SCHOOL, & HOME

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BY

Rev. A. HAMPDEN LEE

MINISTER OF VICARAGE WALK CHURCH, WALSALL

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1899

THE CHILDREN'S SUNDAY.

BIBLE STORIES WITHOUT NAMES.

With Questions at the end of each Chapter and the Answers in a separate booklet.

BY THE

REV. HARRY SMITH, M.A.

THE CHILDREN'S PRAYER:

Addresses to the Young on the Lord's Prayer.

BY

JAMES WELLS, D.D.

OBJECT ADDRESSES

For Church, School, and Home.

BY

REV. A. HAMPDEN LEE.

TO

MY WIFE AND CHILDREN

WHOSE DEEP INTEREST

IN THESE OBJECT ADDRESSES

HAS BEEN A CONTINUAL INSPIRATION

THIS LITTLE BOOK

IS AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED.

PREFACE

ONE of the most important inlets of knowledge is "Eye-gate." A thing seen, however small, arrests the attention and helps the memory.

> "Sounds which address the ear are lost and die
> In one short hour; but that which strikes the eye
> Lives long upon the mind: the faithful sight
> Engraves the knowledge with a beam of light."

Acting upon that idea, the writer has for some years given a short address to young people at the Sunday morning service, and has found a small object, such as a magnet, a piece of chalk, a tuft of grass, very effective. Different objects may teach and enforce the same lesson, but that is rather a gain than otherwise, for as an old

philosopher tells us, "Conviction often arises through hearing the same thing again and again." And children need frequently to be reminded of the advantages of Youth and Industry and Truthfulness. Mr Moodie's "Tools for Teachers" has been helpful in verifying or suggesting some of the anecdotes used in the following Addresses.

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OBJECTS

Which may be used to illustrate the Addresses

ADDRESS

I. A piece of chalk, and, if possible, a photograph of magnified chalk.

II. A horse-shoe magnet and tacks or iron filings.

III. A gold ring with "Mizpah" or some other word engraved upon it.

IV. A tuft of "Lady Grass," some squitch, and a tuft of meadow grass.

V. A few large and garden nettles.

VI. Your own hand.

VII. Some fine dark seed and bright flowers, such as the poppy or calceolaria.

VIII. Two or three pins and a wooden skewer.

IX. Small piece of white salt and lump of rock salt.

X. A handful of leaves, and a twig of privet and rose bush to show position of the leaves.

XI. Few specimen keys, and, if possible, an ancient one.

ADDRESS

XII. Dandelion flowers, root, and green leaves showing lion-like teeth.

XIII. Pieces of thread, twine, and rope.

XIV. Mignonette, pansies, roses, and everlasting flowers, each tied in a small bunch, with text.

XV. An embossed picture, or, better still, a small model of Eddystone Lighthouse.

XVI. A card, "This House to Let."

HYMN

O GOD of our forefathers,
Who didst in days of old
Watch over little children
Like lambs within the fold!
We know that Thou wilt hear us,
While unto Thee we pray,
For blessings on our scholars,
Now in their youthful day.

May they the heavenward journey
In early life begin;
Nor from its pathway wander
To taste the fruits of sin.
But may they love fair Zion,
The Temple of our King;
And, best of all earth's treasures,
Their life an offering bring.

Lord, help them now to serve Thee
As Samuel did of old;
Like Hebrew saints and martyrs
For truth be strong and bold.
And when our hands grow weary,
And age comes on apace,
Lord, grant that these dear children
May fill their fathers' place.

So on throughout the ages,
  Thy work shall never fail,
The cause of Truth shall triumph,
  The Cross of Christ prevail.
And then shall break the morning,
  That Day of days shall come,
When Christ the King of Glory
  Shall take the ransomed home.

A. H. L.

A PIECE OF CHALK

"Though thy beginning was small, yet thy latter end should greatly increase."—JOB viii. 7.

WHEN a boy gets a piece of chalk he is happy, and soon begins to try his hand at drawing upon walls and fences. But few boys know how wonderful is a piece of chalk, and that if it could speak, what strange and marvellous things it could tell about the world in which we live. Chalk is found in many parts of England — from Flamborough Head in Yorkshire to Beachy Head in Sussex. It is seen in the Needles of the Isle of Wight and along the sea-coast of Dorset. The sweet grass of the Wiltshire hills grows upon chalk, and it is also found deep down beneath the busy streets of London. There is chalk in the North of Ireland, and in France and Denmark and

other parts of Europe. It appears in Africa, in the Crimea, and in Central Asia, and helps to make the great mountains of Lebanon where the cedar trees grow. It was near the chalk cliffs of Cæsarea Philippi that Jesus talked with His disciples, and St Peter said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God." Chalk is thus found in many countries, and we are told that if all those countries were brought together, they would be larger than the whole of Europe. Chalk, then, had a great deal to do with the making of our world.

Well, what is chalk? It is largely made of the shells or skeletons of tiny creatures that once lived in the sea. "A cubic inch of some specimens of chalk," says Mr Huxley, "may contain hundreds of thousands of these bodies," tiny shells of many shapes and great beauty, and so small that we need a powerful microscope to see them. Let this little piece of chalk be our teacher, and let us notice some of its lessons.

I. Little things make great things. The cedar mountains of Lebanon, the tall cliffs of Kent, and the South Downs or

hills of England, are made almost entirely of those wonderful little creatures which lived hundreds of thousands of years ago, and which were like those smallest of living things now found at the bottom of the Atlantic Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea. Who would have thought that great things like mountains and cliffs have been formed and built up of minute animals, so small that the eye cannot see them! And it is the same with our life, and with our character and knowledge. The prophet Daniel's goodness and strength of character were the result of little things; he was true and obedient to God when a boy, and when he became a man he would rather be cast into a den of lions than do wrong. Little by little our character is formed, and our knowledge grows.

There is a story told of a boy who lived more than twelve hundred years ago, and like many boys to-day he got tired of school, and thought he never could become a scholar. So he ran away from school, and as the sun grew hot he sat himself down to rest beside a little spring that

gushed out of a rock. As he rested in the shade, and watched the drip, drip of the round drops from the under edge of the rock, he noticed that the continual dropping of the water had hollowed out a basin in the stone beneath. And he began to think. If these little drops of water can scoop out the heart of the stone, then surely if I learn my lessons one by one, I too shall master them and become a learned man. So he went back to school; little by little he acquired knowledge, and became one of the greatest scholars of the time in which he lived. It is said of Dr Johnson, who knew more than most men, that when he had to wait, as he sometimes had when calling to see people, he would spend the time reading some book which he generally carried in his pocket, and in that way he increased his vast store of knowledge. It is by taking care of little things that people get on in life, and do the greatest amount of good.

"Little deeds of kindness,
Little words of love,
Make our earth an Eden
Like the Heaven above."

II. Little things may teach great lessons. It has been said that the man who knew the true history of a piece of chalk would know more about the world in which we live than would the most learned student who simply read books. Chalk tells how the crust of the earth was made, and that long ages ago there were great seas where now there is dry land and the South Down sheep nibble the sweet green grass. Small things become great teachers. "There be four things which are little upon the earth," says Solomon, "but they are exceeding wise." The ant provides for the future, and the coney hides in the rock; locusts teach us that union is strength, and the little spider or lizard bids us persevere.

About twenty years ago a coin was found; it was no bigger than a shilling, and had the name of a Greek town—"Pandosia"—printed upon it. History tells us that it was at the town of Pandosia the rich King Pyrrhus had a mint, and that it was there that he gathered together his army to invade Italy. Strangely enough, no one could exactly tell where-

abouts in Greece this town had been. For over a thousand years it had been a mystery, but, as I have said, about twenty years ago, a little coin was found which could tell more about Pandosia than all the great scholars put together. It told them not only the country, but the name of the river near to which the town was built. "Only a foreign coin," says one; yes, but it is worth to the British Museum the sum of two hundred pounds, the price they are said to have paid for it.

And so the little things in Nature—a bit of chalk, a piece of coal, a little flower—all have wonderful stories to tell us, and great lessons to teach. We may learn from them much about God, "who made the heavens and the earth," how the great changes which took place in the world were preparing it for the dwelling-place of man, and how in the deep cupboards of the earth, God stored away the coal and precious metals for our use in the after-years. The little flower has more to tell us than we can possibly learn.

"Flower in the crannied wall,
I pluck you out of the crannies;—
Hold you here, root and all, in my hand,
Little flower; but if I could understand
What you are, root and all, and all in all,
I should know what God and man is."

III. Little things may be very useful things. The chalk cliffs keep back the sea, and the chalky downs grow the sweetest grass, and after thousands and thousands of years the chalk made by tiny creatures is used by the carpenter at his work, and by the teacher as he writes upon the black-board the lessons he wishes the scholars to learn. Numerous are the uses to which chalk can be put; it can make the dull flame of gas glow and shine with a light like the sun.

The little deeds of little children have sometimes saved a country. In Holland there are sea-walls to prevent the rising tide and the stormy waves from flowing over the land, destroying the houses, and drowning the people. One day a little boy named Hans Vedder, of Haarlem, went out to play in the meadows, and he saw water trickling down from a small

crevice in the sea-wall. The boy knew what it meant, he knew that the little hole would get bigger, and the water would soon rush upon the land, so he put his finger into the crevice and stopped the water, and there he remained, all alone, for many hours, until the people came and made the wall strong. Dutch mothers still talk to their children about little Hans Vedder, and how he saved the town from being flooded by the sea.

Sometimes a little thing is all that is needed to complete a great thing. In an Italian town a large statue was being placed upon its pedestal, and the ropes needed tightening. An English sailor was standing by, and he told the men to throw water upon the ropes, which they did, and soon there was a creaking noise, the ropes began to tighten, and, amid cheers, the beautiful statue was safely and firmly fixed. After all their labour, and all their work with ropes and pulleys, it was only a little thing to do, to throw water upon the ropes, but it was that little thing that completed their difficult task.

A straw is a very light thing, but there

is a proverb which saith, "It's the last straw that breaks the camel's back." Yes, and it is sometimes the last little thing done by a child that sets a great thing in motion. In one of the docks a large vessel was ready to be launched; flags were flying, bands were playing, and the people were all excitement. It is a grand sight to see a noble ship launched. The "dogs" or hold-fasts had been knocked away, but the vessel did not move. There must be something wrong! A look of disappointment came over the faces of the people, but it was soon changed to laughter when a little boy ran up to give the great ship a push. Let the people laugh; that little boy's strength was "the last straw" needed, it gave the start, and the mighty vessel runs down the slips, and floats like a thing of life upon the water, amid the deafening shouts of the people.

It is often thus in life. A father thinks he would be better without strong drink, he feels that he ought to give it up, and almost resolves to do so. It is his little child that gives his resolution the "push" that it needs. He cannot resist the little

pleading face and voice, and he goes and takes the pledge. 'Tis Sunday, and people are going to worship. Father and mother have been thinking and talking about going one of these days. They are uncomfortable. Something within them says "Go!" A little strength is needed, just a little "push," and it comes from their own little girl, who begs of them to go and take her with them.

A piece of chalk is useful, but how much more so may be a little boy or girl who seeks to do something for Jesus Christ; the old prophecy is fulfilled, "And a little child shall lead them."

THE DIVINE MAGNET

"And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me."—JOHN xii. 32.

MORE than two thousand years ago a remarkable stone or ore was discovered which had the wonderful power of attracting iron and some other metals. The people called it "quick iron," that is, "live iron." It was first found in Asia Minor, near to the ancient town of Magnesia, hence probably the name "Magnet." This iron ore is called a natural magnet, and when a bar of steel is rubbed with it, the steel becomes an artificial magnet.

You have all seen, and probably possessed, a magnet in the shape of a horse-shoe or the letter U, and have held it against a knife-blade or key. Get a little heap of iron filings or tacks, and then sway the magnet just above them, and see what takes place. The small pieces of

iron begin to sway to and fro, and as the magnet comes nearer, they leap up towards it, and all cling together like a swarm of bees. In that way you have an illustration of the magnet's power. Now take a piece of metal (lead would do) of the same shape and appearance as the magnet, and hold it near to the tacks. There is no movement, no leaping up, because the piece of lead, so like the magnet to look at, has not, however, the magnet's power.

Jesus Christ often likened the Kingdom of Heaven to the familiar things around Him, and He spoke of it being like a seed and leaven and goodly pearls. And if the people to whom Christ spoke had known the magnet, He might have said—

"The Kingdom of Heaven is like unto a magnet which a man took and held amongst iron filings until every particle of iron was filled with its power."

Jesus Christ also said of Himself, "I am the Door," "I am the Vine," "I am the Light of the World," and if Jesus were here now, as He was eighteen hundred

years ago in Galilee, He would probably say, "I am the Magnet," for He said, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me."

I. Jesus Christ is like the magnet because He draws, He attracts, men, women, and children to Himself. The poor people in Palestine had no friends to care for them, or to help them to live a better life. The Pharisees and priests passed them by in the street, and would lift up their robes, and walk on the other side of the way. The Pharisees were like the piece of metal that looks like a magnet, but which has no drawing power, for there was nothing in the Pharisees and priests to lead the poor people to love and trust them.

But how different it was with Jesus! When He went into the street, He was just like a magnet, and the poor people were at once attracted to Him. "Now all the publicans and sinners were drawing near unto Him for to hear Him." Even the children could not be kept away, and when the disciples tried to prevent them coming, Jesus said, "Suffer the little

children to come unto Me, and forbid them not, for of such is the Kingdom of Heaven."

"Far away in old Judea
Lived the gentle Lord of Love,
And the children gathered round Him
Wheresoever He did move,
And they sometimes left their play
Just to follow Him all day."

And it has always been the same. Wherever Jesus has been preached there has been a power present to draw men to Him. A Moravian missionary was translating into the language of the Esquimaux the Gospel of St John; he was writing the third chapter when some Greenlanders, who were passing, asked him what he was doing. "What is that you are writing?" asked one, and the missionary read the sixteenth verse, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have eternal life." One of the listening savages, Kiarnak by name, exclaimed: "How is that? Tell me again, for I too would fain be saved." His heart felt the

drawing power of Christ, he was attracted by the Saviour's love, and became a Christian. And the same thing has taken place in India and in other parts of the world. "For there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." So in the words of the Monastery Hymn :—

> "Softly sing the sweet word Jesus,
> For 'tis full of love and rest ;
> And the very name of Jesus
> Draws poor sinners to His breast."

II. Jesus Christ is like the magnet because He guides and shows people the way they should take. The Chinese called the magnet "the directing stone," the Icelander called it "the leading stone," the Swede called it "the seeing stone," and we call it "the lodestone," which means the leading or guiding stone. Sailors are guided at sea by the magnetic needle in the mariner's compass. I dare say many of you have had little metal toys, small boats and fish and swans, and you have guided them in the water by a small iron magnet which you have held near to the floating toys. I remember

once being up a Welsh mountain above Aber Waterfalls, and a heavy mist, like a thick fog, settled upon us. We could see only a yard or two in front, and no one knew the way back. One of the party, however, had a compass, and the tiny magnetic needle soon pointed to the North, and by its help we were safely guided through the mist and fog, and found our way back to Llanfairfechan. What a good friend the magnet is to sailors on the pathless sea and to travellers far away on mountains or in deserts.

Now Jesus is such a Friend and Guide to us. He says, "I am the Way," and He tells us that if we follow Him, we "shall not walk in darkness, but in the light of life." Let us then walk in the steps of Jesus, and daily breathe the prayer of the Psalmist, "Show me Thy ways, O Lord; teach me Thy paths."

III. Jesus Christ is like the magnet because He gives His power to those who come near to Him. Put a piece of iron against a magnet, and the power of the magnet enters the iron, and it, too, becomes a magnet, and possesses the power

of attraction so long as the two touch each other. Said the late Professor Drummond, "Remain side by side with Him who loved us, and gave Himself for us, and you will become a permanent magnet, a permanently attractive force, and like Him you will be drawn unto all men."

If I take my penknife and rub its small blade on a horse-shoe magnet, that little piece of steel, that tiny blade, becomes itself a magnet, and picks up, draws to itself, the iron filings and tacks. And so a little child by love and prayer becomes strong in Jesus Christ. Dr Norman Macleod once visited a poor little boy who lived amongst great destitution and crime in a Glasgow court, and he found the child very ill and in great pain. Bending over the bed, the minister took the boy's hand, and looking into his face, said, "My poor little fellow, you're very weak." "Yes, sir," the boy replied, "but I am strong in Him." Dr Macleod was greatly moved by the boy's faith, and he told the story in his sermon the following Sunday. There in a garret,

in the midst of poverty and rags, that dear little child lived a Christian life, and became a magnet because he kept near to Jesus and prayed to Him.

In his Autobiography, the late John Angell James writes that when he was thirteen years old, he went as an apprentice, and he states, "The time was now near when God would draw me to Himself." And the power of God came to John Angell James through a fellow-apprentice who was a young Christian, and had the courage to kneel down by his bedside and silently pray. That lad was the magnet, and he attracted to religion and to Christ his young companion, who afterwards became the famous preacher at Carr's Lane Chapel, Birmingham.

During the Indian Mutiny a small British garrison was overpowered by the rebel soldiers, who took, among the prisoners, a native Christian evangelist. They were so angry with him because he had given up the old idolatrous religion that they determined to kill him unless he denied Jesus Christ. The native was

about to give way, when he heard a voice, saying, "Brother, brother, be steadfast!" The voice came from a young English soldier who had been wounded, and was dying by the roadside. Just at that moment the British troops arrived, and the rebels at once hastened away, leaving behind their prisoners. The native Christian eagerly sought the young soldier whose timely words had strengthened him, but he found him dead—he having died of the wounds received in the struggle. That young soldier, strong in Christ, had, like a magnet, given strength to the native evangelist, and made him strong.

Let us, boys and girls, learn the lessons of the magnet. Christ by His love draws us near to Himself. He guides us in the way of life, and by keeping close to Him, by prayer and love, we, too, become a magnet, and attract others, and help to keep them from falling. You remember the picture of the "Rock of Ages"; how one, rescued from the storm, was clinging to the "Rock," and at the same time she reached forth her hand to save another who was sinking beneath the waters.

That is what we should do. Cling to Christ ourselves, be true and brave, and we shall be the means of helping others, like the young apprentice who helped John Angell James to do right.

"Lord, strengthen me, that while I stand
Firm on the Rock, and strong in Thee,
I may stretch out a loving hand
To wrestlers with the troubled sea."

RINGS AND RING POSIES

"And put a ring on his hand."—LUKE xv. 22.

ONE of the oldest customs is that of wearing rings. Pharaoh took the ring from off his hand and gave it to Joseph. The women of Israel brought their rings to Moses for the work of the Tabernacle. Rings were used for seals, and worn for ornaments. The ancient Romans, at the beginning of their history, did not care about jewellery, but they afterwards became very fond of rings. But with them a ring was a mark of distinction. You could tell something of a man's position by the kind of ring that he wore. If it were a gold one, it showed that he was a magistrate; if it were an iron one, you knew that he was a slave. Among African tribes, in India, in New Guinea, and other parts, rings are largely worn by the natives, and are greatly prized. There are nose-

rings, ear-rings, wrist-rings, and ankle-rings. Some are made from shells, others of bone, while those made of iron are very heavy, weighing several pounds.

We read, too, a great deal about rings in books. There is the story of the ring that tightened, pressed the finger, and gave pain to the wearer whenever he did wrong. The tale of the magic ring which, when held against doors, the bolts and bars would fly back of themselves, and the doors open. Then there is Grimm's fairy tale of the "Robber and his Sons." When the robber put on the ring it kept crying out, "Here I am," so the robber one day cut off his finger and threw it and the ring far away from him. That ring was like our conscience, which keeps speaking to us; and sometimes people try to stop the voice of conscience, and would throw it from them if they could, as the robber did his ring. There is a Chinese story about a ring that made the wearer successful in all that he wished to do. "While you have the ring on your finger," so the story goes, "misfortune shall fly from your house, and nobody shall be able to hurt you." In

almost every language there are wonderful stories about rings.

You all know the beautiful parable of the "Prodigal Son": how the younger brother left his father, and went away to do as he liked in the far country. You know how he soon became poor and wretched, "and no man gave unto him." Then he thought of his father's house and servants, and wished that he was back. "Better be a slave in my father's house than to die here in this misery." So he arose and came to his father. But the father did not treat him as a slave, but quickly said, "Bring forth the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and shoes on his feet." That ring on the hand meant a good deal; all would know that he was not a slave, but that he was a son in his father's house, possessing all the dignity and privileges of a member of the family. Now let us notice three things about this ring.

I. It is a ring of sonship. A slave was not allowed to wear a ring, unless it was an iron one; but he who was free, who was a son in the house, wore a gold ring. The

prodigal had sold or lost his gold ring in the far country of sin, but when, with weeping eyes, he returned, the father said, "'Put a ring on his hand,' for he is my son, and I want himself and you all to know it."

Is not man like that prodigal? He has turned his back upon God, and has gone into the far country. We think that the world will be a much happier place to us than the Church of Christ; but we learn by experience our mistake. We are not happy. Sin makes us miserable, and, like the prodigal, we want to get away from it and to live in the Father's house.

How different is Jesus, our elder brother, from the elder brother of the parable! Man had flung away his gold ring of sonship, and had become a slave to sin and wickedness. Then it was that Jesus came into the world to tell us of God's love, and how we might live again in the Father's house. It is Jesus who gives us the right, the privilege, to become children of God. So the "ring of sonship" can again be put on the hand of every one who will receive it. This is more precious than the most jewelled ring which kings and

princes wear. You may be pleased to receive a gold ring on your birthday; but there is no greater joy than to know that your sins are forgiven, and that you are a child of God, through faith in Jesus Christ.

II. The next thing I want you to notice about this ring is that it is a ring of promise. There are what are sometimes called "ring posies"—that is, that on the ring there is engraved some promise or word of love. On many rings there is the word "Mizpah," which means, "God watch between you and me;" on others—and some of them very ancient ones—there are such words as these: "Endless my love as thou shalt prove," "May God above increase our love," "No gift can show the love I owe." The ring would be a continual reminder of a friend's love and prayer. And so it is with us when we believe in Jesus Christ. He makes many great and precious promises to us. How beautiful is this promise, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee"! When the disciples were on the stormy sea, Jesus was with them; when they were "toiling in rowing"

against a head wind, Jesus came and helped them; and when they were in an upper room in Jerusalem, with doors and windows barred for fear of the Jews, Jesus appeared to them. And so Jesus would have us learn that He is ever with us, to shield us from harm and help us to do right.

You remember the story of the little girl who was lost in the forest, and wandered about in the dark all night. When some asked if she had not been afraid of the wolves, the dear child replied, "No, for God would not let them hurt me."

I once stood by the cot of a little child who was fast asleep, the picture of peace and safety. It was very beautiful, for in her hand the sleeping child held a printed text, "He is able to keep thee." Yes, the light and dark are both alike to Him. So, wherever we are, let us remember the "ring-posy" of Jesus, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee."

III. The last thing I want you to notice about this ring is that it will not fail you in time of need and trouble.

Rings have often been given by kings and queens as marks of favour and protection. Every schoolboy remembers the story of the Earl of Essex, chief favourite of Queen Elizabeth. For many years he served her faithfully, and, as a token of regard, she gave him a valuable gold ring, requesting him whenever in danger to send the ring to her. Later in the reign the Earl was accused of treason, and was condemned to death. At that hour he thought of the ring, and sent it to the Queen by the hand of one of the Court ladies. She happened to be the wife of the Earl's bitterest enemy, and he would not permit her to deliver the ring. Queen Elizabeth was exceedingly anxious about her unhappy favourite, and hoped every day that he would send the ring and beseech her help. But, alas! it came not, and on 25th February 1601 the Earl was led to the scaffold. The Queen never again looked up, and when she afterwards learned that the lady had kept back the ring, the Queen in great anger exclaimed, "God may forgive thee; I never shall."

That poor nobleman's ring failed him

through one proving untrue. She did not hand it to the Queen. But our ring need pass through no other hand but our own—that is, we need not wait for priest or minister, but wherever we are, we can pray to God ourselves, and ask Him for guidance and help. Here is a little story I remember once seeing, which illustrates what I have been saying, that we can pray to God at all times for mercy and help.

There was once a king who employed a great many of his people to work for him as weavers. The silk and the patterns were all given by the king. He told the workers when they met with any trouble to go to him, and that they never need be afraid of troubling him.

Many persons—men, women, and children—were busy at the loom. Among these was a little girl, who always seemed bright and cheerful over her work, though she was often left to do it alone. One day some of the workers were much troubled about their work. Their threads were tangled and broken, and the work they were finishing was not like the patterns given them

to copy. Then they gathered round the cheerful little girl, and said—

"Tell us how it is that you are always happy in your work, while we are constantly getting into trouble?"

"Why," replied the little weaver, "I always go to the king when I am in trouble. You know he told us we might do so."

"So do we," they said, "every night and morning."

"Ah!" said the child, "*but I go directly*, as soon as I find that I get into a little tangle. So I always get help at once, and this saves a great deal of trouble."

That was the secret of her being so successful and happy. She went at once to the king for help.

We are like those weavers, and our life often gets into little tangles and troubles. God, our Heavenly King, has told us to go at all times to Him and tell Him our little trials and cares. We need not wait until the evening, but let us go to God in prayer at the very time we require guidance and help. God's promise will not fail us like the nobleman's ring. "Call upon Me in

the day of trouble," saith the Lord; "I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify Me."

Do not forget the golden lessons of the ring! First, it tells us of freedom; that we need not remain slaves, under the power of sin, but may enjoy all the privileges of children in the Heavenly Father's House. It is also the love-token of Jesus, reminding us of His presence and help, and that wherever we may be, or however small or great our need, we can go at once to Him in prayer. There is yet one other lesson a ring teaches. Look at it! it is a circle; it has no end. With the early Christians a ring was always the sign or symbol of eternity. The life and blessings that Jesus gives are unending—"in His presence there is fulness of joy, and at His right hand there are pleasures *for evermore*."

SMOOTH GREEN GRASS

"And God said, Let the earth bring forth grass."
—GEN. i. 11.

THE first beautiful thing God created or caused to appear upon the earth was grass. "And God said, Let the earth bring forth grass," let it be covered with "greenness" or tender grass. Before the "third day" there had been light and water and the bare earth and rocks and mountains, but no one would like to live in such a world as that—no grass, no trees, no flowers. But God meant our earth to be a beautiful dwelling-place for man, so He made the grass to grow upon the mountains and to cover the plains and valleys. A great writer has said that there is "nothing by man so deeply loved, by God so highly graced," as the grass of the field. God adorned the earth with this

beautiful robe of greenness when He was about to introduce man to it, just as a mother nicely dresses her child when she expects a friend to call at her house. How good is God to make this world so bright and cheerful, to clothe the earth with the sweet tender grass!

There are different kinds of grass, and each kind has something to tell us—some message for boys and girls. There are what we call *ornamental grasses*, the "sword grass" and the "lady grass"; they are very beautiful with their variegated colours, with their streaks of green and yellow; they make very pretty borders in our gardens, but they are not very serviceable. We read that "God causeth the grass to grow for the cattle," but the oxen and sheep turn away from this gay-looking grass; it is not the kind that they like. And there are some boys and girls who think more about their hats and dresses, more about their appearance, than they do about their behaviour and usefulness. Let us remember that "handsome is that handsome does." Then there is that *rank grass* which is called "squitch"

or "quitch." Its name comes from the word "quick," that is, to be full of life, and when once it gets in our gardens we find it a difficult task to get rid of it. Underground, out of sight, it sends forth its white sharp spikes, and it is very destructive. A friend once brought me a number of bluebell bulbs which had been pierced through and killed by this quitch grass, and there they were strung upon it like a number of big beads. The only way to get rid of it is to root it out and burn it. A poet calls it "the vicious quitch," and like that rank and deadly grass are bad habits. Many young people get into the way of being untruthful, idle, and ill-tempered, and the "quitch" of bad habits destroys their goodness and spoils their life. But there is yet another kind of grass, *the sweet tender grass of the meadow.* It is not so gay-looking, not so strong as the other kinds, but it is more beloved and useful. Mrs Browning writes: "There are nettles everywhere, but smooth green grasses are more common still." How thankful we should be for "the smooth green grass"! How fond the

sheep and the cattle are of it! I sometimes preach in a chapel, not far from Dudley, called "Sweet Turf Chapel." Once upon a time, where streets and houses now are, there were meadows, and the cows always preferred one field because the grass in it was sweet and tender, hence the name "Sweet Turf." Now it is of meadow grass I wish to speak.

I. How useful is the grass! Although it is small and weakly by itself, little spikes of feeble green, yet without the grass there would soon be famine and death. Without it we should be worse off than Pharaoh was during the plagues in Egypt. All cattle would die, and soon the world would become as it was on the "third day" of creation, a world of seas and rivers, of rocks and mountains, but all bare and dead. No green grass, no cattle, no people. One of the most precious and useful things this world possesses—far more precious than gold or silver—is the grass of the field. I have seen men mowing the grass high up the mountains in Switzerland, and then carrying it down in bundles on their heads;

and in some parts on the coast of Scotland, shepherds pull sheep along ropes to a rocky island, that they may live and fatten on the sweet smooth grass. In Africa and other lands grass is used for making clothing and mats. I once saw a Japanese rain-dress—a kind of waterproof coat—made entirely of dried grass. In many ways grass is very useful.

"It fringes the stream, and cushions the flower,
And hugs the soft root to its breast;
And flies that have wetted their wings in the shower
Here shelter and build them a nest.
And in the hedge-guarded meadow, or furze-covered heath,
Where the rabbit makes hollows and burrows beneath,
And timidly flies as we pass;
The bee who's been tuning his bugle in fun,
The cricket that chirrup'd all day in the sun,
Each finds a glad home in the grass."

Sometimes boys and girls wonder what they can do, they are so small, and know but very little. Of what use can they be in this great and busy world? The Bible and History often speak of the work and

brave deeds of the young. Samuel waited upon Eli, and the little Israelitish maid was a great blessing in the house of Naaman the Syrian. When Jesus wanted to feed the multitude the disciple Andrew said, "There is a lad here with five barley loaves and two small fishes." May there always be "a lad here" when Jesus wants to do something. There was a lad in the wild district of Lystra, and he helped to keep together the churches, and that lad became Timothy, the Bishop of Ephesus. In one of the South Sea Islands a little boy asked the missionary to let him do something for Jesus. "Well," said the minister, "what is there that you can do?" The little fellow quickly replied, "I can ring the church bell." Another boy regularly every Sunday guided a poor blind man to the house of God. Boys and girls are among the best workers for our missionary societies, and very often collect more money than all the grown-up people put together.

In 1882, during the Egyptian War, a lad did splendid service for the British troops, and helped to win the famous battle of

Tel-el-Kebir. It was necessary for our troops, under the cover of night, to cross a pathless desert, but no one knew the way. A young naval officer—a mere boy —volunteered to guide the soldiers across the desert by the light of the stars. He was placed at the head of the regiment, and with muffled tread the soldiers marched on, the lad keeping his eyes upon the stars, as he had sometimes done on board ship at sea. And in the grey dawn of the early morning the trenches of Arabi Pasha, the Egyptian general, lay before them. There was movement in the enemy's camp, alarm guns were fired, the British soldiers had been discovered, and the bullets soon began to fly about their ears. One of the first bullets hit the youthful guide; he fell mortally wounded and was carried to the rear. The battle was fought and won, and at the earliest opportunity the British commander went back to see how the young lad was faring, and found that he was breathing his last. As the officer entered the lad looked up eagerly into his face and said, "Colonel, didn't I lead them straight?" Brave boy! he had done his

duty. In the home, at school, in the playground, there are younger ones watching you, looking up to you; be like the little midshipman, "lead them straight."

II. How cheerful-looking is the grass of the field. The very sight of the green hills helps to drive away care and sorrow, and we feel that we must run over the soft springy turf like Tom Hood's schoolboys:—

> "Away they sped with gamesome minds,
> And souls untouch'd by sin;
> To a level mead they came, and there
> They drave the wickets in. . . .
>
> Like sportive deer they coursed about,
> And shouted as they ran,—
> Turning to mirth all things of earth,
> As only boyhood can."

There is nothing so dearly loved by children as a green field, in which they can play cricket, and run about at their own sweet will. Every year thousands of poor little boys and girls, who live huddled up in the courts and alleys of East London, have "a day in the country," a romp in the fields, with no policeman there to call out,

"Keep off the grass!" It is the happiest day in their life to get away from the bricks and mortar and dingy courts, and to get among the buttercups and daisies. Solomon tells us that "a merry heart is a good medicine," and so it is that the cheerful-looking grass, in making us glad, does us all good. People in far-away lands long for the green fields of Old England, the smooth sweet grass.

Let the grass teach us to be cheerful. Boys and girls should be like bits of sunshine in the home. I knew a house in which there were no children, and the husband and wife felt lonely, so they "adopted" a little girl to live with them. The wife said to me one day, "I am so disappointed, I thought little Eliza would be such a joy to us; but instead of being bright and happy, she pouts her lips and sulks about." Instead of being a bit of sunshine, she was a little dark cloud; instead of being cheerful-looking like the grass, she was a dull November day. But how can we become glad? Solomon again tells us that "a merry heart maketh a cheerful countenance." So the real secret

of joy rests with the heart—the heart must be glad. And the Psalmist says of God, "Thou hast put gladness in my heart." That is it. God makes us glad by loving us, and by giving His Son, Jesus Christ, to be our Saviour and Friend. Pray to Him, boys and girls, that you may have this gladness in your hearts, and then, like the grass of the field, you will not only be cheerful-looking, but you will make others happy as well.

III. But the grass and meadow flowers teach us that the way to be happy is to put our trust in God. I have seen grass and wild flowers that "skirt the eternal frost," high up mountains where man seldom goes; they grow also on ledges of rock deep down precipices, and by the dusty road-side, where sometimes they are trodden under foot. But wherever the grasses are they seem to say, "God put us here, and He will take care of us." I once read of a little girl to whom the grass spoke a very comforting word. She was very sad, sorrow had darkened her home, her father had died, and she did not know how they could possibly get along without

father. Very cast down in spirits, she went for a walk in the fields, and, poor child, she sat down upon the grass and cried. Presently she raised her head, and caught sight of a little daisy at her feet, and as she gazed at its simple beauty, she seemed to hear a voice saying—

> "If God so clothe the grass of the field,
> Shall He not much more clothe you,
> O ye of little faith?"

"Oh, yes," thought she, "I shall not be forsaken. I, too, will look up, even as the daisy." So, with a bright smile, she gathered the daisy and sang—

> "He who careth for the flowers,
> Will much more care for me."

NETTLES OF IDLENESS

"I went by the field of the slothful, and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding; and, lo, it was all grown over with thorns, and nettles had covered the face thereof, and the stone wall thereof was broken down."—PROV. xxiv. 30, 31.

NETTLES are covered with very fine bristles that prick and sting the hand that touches them. If we were to look at a nettle through a microscope, we should see that these bristles are something like needles, and that is why we call this prickly plant a "nettle."

It is said that there are as many as forty kinds of nettle. They are found in nearly all parts of the world, especially in Africa, Palestine, and other Eastern lands. There are only three kinds that grow in England, the most poisonous of which is called the "Roman nettle," and

may be found under walls and hedges, and on waste places near the sea; it abounds most in Norfolk and Suffolk. The other two are the great nettle and the small or garden nettle, both of which we all well know, and have probably felt their smarting sting, and have been glad of a friendly dock leaf to rub the hand and soothe the irritation.

Nettles grow very quickly, and soon spread over the soil. So if a man is idle, and does not take the trouble to weed his garden, it will soon be covered with nettles and thorns and thistles. Solomon points this out in the book of Proverbs. Consider the vineyard of the slothful, look upon it, and receive instruction.

Most instructive are the lessons suggested, some of which we will now notice.

I. Idleness lets in sin. The poet Chaucer—the father of English poetry—who lived more than five hundred years ago, tells us the same thing. I will give it in his own quaint way: "Ydelnes, that is the gate of all harmes." Solomon said that the walls of an idle man's field are broken down, his doors are open for all

sorts of evil things to enter, and his garden is soon covered over with weeds. Travellers tell us that in Palestine and in Africa vast plains, that might have been decked with golden corn, are filled with thorns and nettles. And it is the same with the character and life of an idle boy or an idle girl. Instead of the flowers of beauty and the fruits of usefulness, there are the weeds of sin, and the nettles of sloth. An old writer has said—

> "An Idler's like a watch that wants both hands,
> As useless when it goes as when it stands."

While we all remember Dr Watts' well-known lines—

> "Satan finds some mischief still
> For idle hands to do."

A dreamy boy, standing with his mouth open, is ready to take in any germs of disease that may be floating in the air, and in the same way idleness lays us open to every kind of mischief and evil that is waiting to find a place wherein it can do its deadly work. There is an African thorn called "stop-a-while." If

Wait-a-bit

a person once gets caught in it, it is with difficulty he escapes with clothes upon his back, for every attempt to loosen one part only hooks another more firmly. The man who is so caught is in a pitiable plight ere he gets loose. A boy may soon get into the habit of being idle, and, when asked to do anything, instead of going at once he "stops-a-while." You see he is being caught in the African thorn which spoils his character and destroys his usefulness. Perhaps some of you have seen Hogarth's pictures, "An Idle Apprentice." First he neglects his work, then he gambles, then he is sent to sea as a "ne'er-do-well," then he is discovered in the act of theft and murder, and then, ere the curtain falls, he stands at the bar of justice, and is sentenced to be executed. It is a very sad series of pictures, and shows how terrible are the evils that enter through the open door of an idle life.

II. Idleness keeps out good. The field of the slothful was grown over with thorns and nettles. Weeds are very selfish, they want all the ground and all the sunlight to themselves. The thorns choke the young

rising plants, and the tall nettles cast their rank shadow over any tender herb growing beneath. An idle man will not go to the trouble of growing good seed, and therefore the thorns and nettles have it all their own way, and they soon make havoc of any garden or field.

A philosopher was one day talking with Coleridge, the poet, and told him that children ought not to be taught religion, but that they should be left unbiased until they are old enough to make a choice and chose to make one. "Look at my garden," replied Coleridge, "that is an unbiased garden; I have sown or planted nothing in it, but you see the ground is occupied, and instead of fragrant flowers and useful herbs you find only rank nettles and deadly weeds." If you are to have good things in your life, the mind and the heart must be cultivated, for Jesus teaches that nothing good can come without effort.

We read in the Gospel that "the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field," and it is very rarely that good things are found on the surface. The

amount of toil which men undergo to get nuggets and even finest gold dust is amazing. And we ought not to be afraid of work to obtain the far more precious blessings of knowledge. "I have a secret to tell you," said a dying man to his three sons; "a great treasure lies hidden in the estate which I am about to leave you." Then with eagerness the young men exclaimed, "O father, where is it hid?" "I am about to tell you," said the old man, "you will have to dig for it——" But his breath gave way, and he died without imparting the secret. The young men were anxious to find it, so they digged every field. They discovered no treasure, but they learned to work, and when the fields were sown, and the harvest came, lo! the yield was prodigious, in consequence of the thorough tillage which they had undergone. Then it was that they discovered the treasure concealed in the estate, of which their wise old father had advised them.

"Work, work, my boy, be not afraid,
Look labour boldly in the face;
Take up the hammer or the spade,
And blush not for their humble place.

There's glory in the shuttle's song,
There's triumph in the anvil's stroke;
There's merit in the brave and strong
Who dig the mine or fell the oak."

III. Idleness injures others. A gentleman who lived in London had great difficulty in keeping his garden clear of weeds, for his next-door neighbour entirely neglected his patch of ground, and the seeds blew over and took root in my friend's flower beds. This went on for a year or two, and at last he had to ask his neighbour to let him go and dig his ground and destroy the weeds. In the same way, an idle boy injures other boys; he stands about and tempts them to neglect their school lessons and daily work. "One sinner destroyeth much good," and for any one to lead others to do wrong is to add sorrow upon sorrow. Jesus says it would be better for such an one that "a mill stone were hanged about his neck, and that he was cast into the midst of the sea." We all loathe those cruel men who by false lights tempted mariners at sea to steer their vessels upon the rocks and sandbanks, but there is

something worse than that; it is moral wreckers; those who idle about and lead others into sin; those who loiter and lounge at street corners to waylay the unwary. My son, be found not among these, and if not for thine own sake, for the sake of thine influence upon others, cast away sloth, and "whatsoever thy hands find to do, do it with all thy might."

IV. Idleness brings ruin. The next verses in the twenty-fourth chapter of Proverbs go on to state:—

"Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep: so shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth, and thy want as an armed man."

It does not state that poverty will come upon you with the suddenness of a flash of lightning, or with the rush of a mountain torrent, but as one that "travelleth," that is, gradually yet surely, and like "an armed man," want will overcome you and lay you low.

There is a famous painting by the artist D. Retz, entitled "The Losing Game."

In it Satan is represented as playing on a chess-board the solemn game of life with a bright and hopeful youth. An angel is looking on. The point at which the artist represents the game is where the youth is just entering upon young manhood; consequently the players have been engaged some little time. The youth's perplexed look, the mournful expression on the angel's face, the number of pieces taken by Satan, all go to prove that the youth is indeed playing "a losing game." Satan has been very active, and all his pieces are well in play, and the two that he is using with most deadly effect are the "Queen" of *pleasure*, and the "Knight" of *sloth*. Pleasure and idleness are the twin temptations which so often overcome the young. The youth has lost heavily because he has been indifferent and negligent; he is losing, through indolence, life's momentous game that can only be once played. One day I asked two youths, who were aspiring to high positions, what they considered the greatest danger and hindrance to young men, and they both replied, Indolence—not taking

pains. That is so. It is indifference, negligence, idleness, that prevent many a youth from acquiring knowledge, and many a young man from securing success. "It is a solemn fact that ruin comes not by cultivation, but by neglect." Do nothing, and your garden will soon be covered with thorns and nettles, and it is the same with your life. Do nothing, and you are ruined—lost. "How shall we escape if we *neglect* so great salvation?"

Begin now to be and to do something! Lay hold with a purposeful hand of the nettles of sloth, and pull them up root and all! Be resolute!

> "Tender-handed touch a nettle,
> And it stings you for your pains,"

but grasp it firmly, and uproot and fling it from you. Like St Paul, have a purpose—"For to me to live is Christ;" and like him, look to the same source for power—"I can do all things through Christ, which strengtheneth me." Your life will not then be like the vineyard of

the slothful, full of thorns and nettles, but like "a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper."

THE WONDERFUL HAND

"Thou openest Thine hand, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing."—Ps. cxlv. 16.

AN old writer states that the two greatest gifts of God to man are the gift of reason and the gift of that wonderful instrument—the hand. With his reason man adorns the mind, with his hand he clothes the body. From the time when Adam and Eve "sewed fig-leaves together" until the present day, the hand has been very busy weaving and making garments to protect us from the keen cold of winter and from the glowing heat of summer.

By being a willing and able servant to the mind, the hand has been one of the greatest benefactors of mankind. It has enabled the artist to take up his brush, and paint pictures of surpassing beauty, which are among the greatest treasures a nation pos-

sesses. The hand has guided the sculptor's chisel, and made the cold white marble almost breathe with life ; and it is the hand that has fashioned the harp and the organ, and lifted up the soul of man by the sweet strains of music. What wonders, too, have the builder and mechanic produced by the help of the hand ! The great Pyramids of Egypt and the vast Colosseum at Rome ; our splendid cathedrals and castles, vessels that sail the seas, and mighty fleets that defend our island home and the colonies across the water—these all show the skill and power of the wonder-working hand. Then there are marvellous engines and wonderful clocks, and whirling machinery of all kinds, before which we stand in breathless amazement. But one of the greatest blessings the hand has bestowed upon us is seen in the books that have been written ; for it was the hand that wrote the old manuscripts of the Bible, and made it possible for us to hold conversation with great and good men who lived thousands of years ago. Truly, many and marvellous have been the works of the hand.

"I will give thanks unto God," says the

Psalmist, "for I am fearfully and wonderfully made."

Look at the hand—the wrist, for instance—what a wonderful piece of mechanism! Place your elbow on a table, and open the inner side of the hand towards your face, and then slowly turn the hand round, and the wrist, more marvellous than any swivel, enables you to do so without moving your elbow. An infidel when doing that was so struck with the delicate and wonderful contrivance of the wrist, that he became a believer in God. A Hindoo once said to a missionary, "It's wonderful, my hand is full of hinges," and if you count them, you will find that there are at least fourteen; and thus the hand, with its twenty-seven separate bones, is one of the most beautiful, as well as most marvellous, things in the world.

I. The hand clearly teaches that man is made to *work*. A learned doctor, named Galen, who lived seventeen hundred years ago, wrote upon this very subject. He pointed out that the separation of the fingers, and their different length, gave the hand great power of grasp, while the thumb,

by being used opposite to the fingers, which no other creature can so use, enabled the hand to lay firm hold of the very smallest as well as of things of great size. How adapted is the hand for every kind of work, and that adaptation is a sign that the all-wise God who made us, intended that we should be workers and not idlers in the great vineyard of the world.

We learn from the Gospels that Jesus worked as a carpenter in the little mountain town of Nazareth, for in after-years, when Jesus, as the Great Rabbi, visited the scenes of His early life, the people were astonished and said, "Is not this the carpenter?" We can picture the Saviour of men working with His hands in the village wheelwright's shop, and helping to provide for the wants of the family by making ploughs and yokes and rakes and harrows. Justin Martyr, who lived a little more than a century after Christ, states that in his time articles said to have been made by Jesus were eagerly purchased as relics. It was a custom with the Jews that all should be engaged in some business, and they had a saying, "That beautiful is the learning of the law along

with a trade," and it is very beautiful to think that Jesus placed honour on labour by Himself working as a carpenter at Nazareth.

It is only the vain and foolish who speak against work. One day some ignorant writer tried to cast reproach upon one of our judges by stating that when a youth he had been employed in business. The judge replied that it was quite true that he had been engaged in commercial pursuits, and rather than feeling ashamed of it, he was afraid that he felt proud of the fact that he had risen to the high position he had been called to occupy. But for any one to be so mean as to speak against another because he had been engaged in work, and to think that such a thing was a reproach, was in itself an indication of a very little mind. And the judge was right. For just as the eye is made to see, and the ear to hear, so the hands are made for work, and never let us be ashamed of honest toil.

"Work for some good—be it never so lowly;
Labour—all labour is noble and holy."

II. The hand also teaches us to be

generous. If you look at a picture of the talons and claws of birds and beasts of prey, you will find that they all turn inwards, indicating that it is their nature to get all they can. I once saw a painting of Satan, and the artist made his hands bent inwards like a claw, intending to show that Satan, like a lion, was always ready to grasp and take whatever came within his reach and power. But the Psalmist says of God, "Thou openest Thine hand, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing." Under the figure of a wide open hand the Bible speaks of God's bountiful generosity—He "giveth liberally and upbraideth not."

Now look at your hand; it is not like a crook or claw. You can open it wide, and thereby learn that your life must not be spent like that of a miserable miser, gathering together, with claw-like fingers, all you can, but that you are to be like God—open-handed—as ready to give as you are to receive.

Two ladies were discussing one day what it was that made a beautiful hand. They differed in opinion, and so they asked a gentleman friend to decide which was the

most graceful hand. He felt that he was in a very delicate position, and as he glanced from one to the other of the beautiful white hands presented to him, he replied at last, "I give it up—the question is too hard for me; but ask the poor, and they will tell you that the most beautiful hand in the world is the hand that gives."

How beautiful must have been the hand of Jesus, for He was always giving, ever doing good. It has been said that we stand too far away from our work; we speak, it may be, a kindly word; we give a little help, but Jesus "put forth His hand and touched them." He was sympathetic with the poor and needy. How many kind and helpful things did Jesus with His hand! A little boy had fallen down in a fit, "And Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up." There was sorrow in the house of Jairus, the sunshine had gone, for the little daughter was dead. But Jesus came, and taking the little hand in His, said, "Talitha cumi," using the very words the mother had no doubt often used in a morning, "Little one, get up!" and the child arose from her sleep of death and Jesus gave her back

to her rejoicing parents. And when the "mothers of Salem" brought their children to Him, we read, "And Jesus laid His hands on them and blessed them." On another occasion He stretched forth His hand and saved Peter from sinking in the sea; He touched the poor leper, who had not felt a kindly touch for years, and healed him of his leprosy; He put His hands on the sightless eyes of the blind, and they looked up with joy into His gracious face; and in the evening, as He walked through the narrow streets of Jerusalem, He touched with His hands the sick and diseased who lay in a long line on either side, and "He healed them all." Let our hand, our open hand, teach us to be kind and generous, not to be always thinking of ourselves, but helping to make others happy. When we think of all the loving things which Jesus did, it makes us feel sad when we remember the lines of the hymn—

"And those kind hands which did such good,
They nailed them to a cross of wood."

III. Let the hand remind us yet of one other thing, and that is to *pray*. From

earliest times it has been the custom to lift up, to fold, the hands in prayer. Abraham did so, and in the twenty-eighth Psalm David writes—

"Hear the voice of my supplication when I cry unto Thee, when I lift up my hands towards Thy holy oracle."

Jeremiah bids us do the same, while the apostle Paul desired that men would everywhere lift up their hands in prayer to God.

Among other things the folding of the hands in prayer is a sign of reverence, and we should all be reverent when we draw near to God. And when we pray, let us not forget those who know not God, for there are millions who have never heard His name, and know nothing of God's love in sending His Son Jesus Christ to save us from our sins.

You have, perhaps, seen a diagram which, in different colours, gives the number of Protestant and other peoples of the world. At a missionary meeting one of the speakers said that he had been helped in prayer by comparing his hand to that diagram. Think that the lines of the fingers are level, and let the space from the finger-tips to

the first line stand for the Protestant population (135 millions), and the space to the second line for the Greek and Roman Catholic population (280 millions), and then the space to the third and bottom line of the fingers for the Mohammedan population (200 millions), while the rest of the hand, all the palm, right to the wrist, may be taken to represent the heathen population (877 millions). So, when you fold your hands in prayer, think of all those millions who are living without God and without hope in the world, and earnestly pray that the day may soon come when "the glory of the knowledge of God shall cover the whole earth even as the waters fill the sea."

MISSIONARY DIAGRAM.

Think that the lines across your fingers are level, and then the spaces will give a fair representation of the different peoples of the world. The small section marked "Jews" stands for eight millions. (*See page* 77.)

SEEDS OF BEAUTY

"It doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is."—1 JOHN iii. 2.

THERE are many wonderful things in the world, but perhaps the most wonderful of all is the tiny seed of a plant; it is often so small and dark that it looks exactly like coal dust, and yet from it there come forth the most beautiful flowers—the yellow calceolaria, the blue lobelia, and the golden featherfume. Take in your hand some of this seed, finer than grains of sand, and so light that a breath of wind would blow it away, and say to it, "Little seed, it doth not yet appear what you shall be, but we know that, by the help of kindly soil and warm sunshine and gentle rain, you will become great and beautiful, clothed in richer robes than ever King Solomon wore."

Just eighteen hundred years ago, St John wrote a letter to believers in Christ, and said to them, "It doth not yet appear what we shall be." Those early Christians were not rich people—many of them were persecuted and suffered the loss of all things for Christ's sake. Some of the great men of the world sneered at the Gospel, and spoke of believers as being only working men—weavers, carpenters, and labourers—as if there were something to be ashamed of in having to earn one's living. There is real majesty in work. "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work," said Jesus; and He bids all of us "work while it is called to-day." But still, the rich people, proud princes, and learned doctors, especially one named Celsus, looked down upon the early Christians, and spoke against them simply because they were poor. But in his letter, which is his first epistle, St John reminded the poor believers that they would not always be despised and looked down upon, for the day was coming when they would be crowned, and clothed in the royal robes of heaven, and rich in treasures that fade not away. "It doth not yet appear

what we shall be, but we know that when He shall appear we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." "We shall be like Him," said the apostle—like the ascended, glorified Christ!

I. There is often among men, even in this life, as great a change as that which takes place when the dark and powdery seed becomes the bright and beautiful flowers. In the second chapter of Exodus we read that a poor Hebrew mother put her little babe in an ark of bulrushes, and put it among the reeds by the river's brink. "Little babe, it doth not yet appear what you shall be." Who would have thought that the little weeping child, rocked to sleep by the waves, would one day become a great man in Egypt, and the leader and lawgiver of God's people Israel? The Bible is full of wonderful stories how little children, the children of poor parents, became great prophets and preachers and kings, such as Samuel and David and Timothy. And not only in the Bible, but in almost every land there are many instances of poor children becoming learned scholars and leaders and rulers of men. It

is said of a German teacher that he always took off his hat when he entered the school-room and appeared before his boys; and when some one remarked to him that he seemed very reverential in the presence of his scholars, the teacher replied: "Who can tell who may rise up among these youths! There may be among them wise doctors sage legislators, and even princes of the empire." He could say of the boys, "It doth not yet appear what they shall be;" and little did that teacher think that among the scholars the lad named Martin would become the great Martin Luther, "the solitary monk that shook the world."

In Plymouth there was a little boy whose father was a brickmaker. His father unfortunately used to spend his money in drink, and the poor little fellow, instead of going to school, had to work hard carrying mortar and bricks. One day, when he was twelve years old—it was on 13th February 1817 — he was climbing up a ladder with a load of slates, when he missed his footing and fell to the ground, a distance of thirty-five feet. He was taken up senseless, conveyed home,

and lay for a fortnight in a state of unconsciousness. When he began to get better, he wondered why his friends did not speak to him; every one seemed silent; there was no noise, and when he asked for anything, those around him simply made signs with their hands. What did it all mean? Why, the poor little boy was deaf, and no efforts could restore his hearing. The fall had injured him for life. Who would have thought that the poor deaf lad, lying there week after week upon his bed, and then afterwards taken to Plymouth Workhouse—who would have thought that one day he would become the great Dr Kitto, who wrote so many valuable books about the Bible! The change was as wonderful as from the tiny seed to the beautiful and fragrant flower. One might speak, too, of other boys who became great —of Benjamin Franklin, the printer's lad, who became American Ambassador to European Courts, and stood before kings; of James Abram Garfield, the poor canal-boat boy, who became President of the United States of America; or of Thomas Elva Edison, the porter lad at a railway

station, who invented the wonderful phonograph and the brilliant electric lamp.

II. But the greatest change will take place when we leave the weakness and poverty of earth for the riches and glory of heaven. In one of His parables Jesus speaks of this wonderful change.

"Now there was a certain rich man, and he was clothed in purple and fine linen, faring sumptuously every day; and a certain beggar named Lazarus was laid at his gate, full of sores, and desiring to be fed with the crumbs that fell from the rich man's table; yea, even the dogs came and licked his sores. And it came to pass that the beggar died, and that he was carried away by the angels into Abraham's bosom."

Who would have thought that in so short a time so great a change would have taken place! Had any one leaned over to comfort and help the poor dying beggar, he might have fancied he heard an angel whispering sweetly, "Poor Lazarus, it doth not yet appear what you shall be; bear up, be brave, for soon you will be with Abraham and all the blessed ones in the paradise of

God." And so St John wrote to the poor persecuted Christians in his day, and reminded them that, just as beauteous plants come from dark and tiny seeds, so the glorious life of bliss in heaven would follow the struggling life of faith on earth.

"We shall be like him," said the apostle. No language can describe the glory of the risen Christ, whom one day we shall be like. In the Book of Revelation we have a wonderful picture of Jesus—too wonderful for us fully to understand. And then we read of the saints in heaven, the multitude which no man can number, "standing before the throne and before the Lamb, arrayed in white robes and palms in their hands. Who are they, and whence came they? These are they which came out of the great tribulation, and they washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more, neither shall the sun strike upon them, nor any heat; for the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall be their shepherd, and shall guide them unto fountains of life;

and God shall wipe away every tear from their eyes."

What a glorious change! The poor shall be clothed in the livery of heaven, and those who battled hard on earth shall there carry the palms of victory. Lazarus shall no longer need the crumbs from the rich man's table, and those who were despised and downtrodden here below shall see "the King in His beauty," and all the troubles and trials of earth shall for ever flee away, like the darkness of night before the light of the eternal morning. Truly we may say of the poorest child who believes in Christ, "It doth not yet appear what you shall be."

III. Now, how is this great change brought about? How may these seeds, so small and dark, become beautiful and fragrant flowers? They must first be sown, and they must be sown in the right place—not on the hard path, where they may be trodden upon and crushed, or picked up and devoured by the birds, but they must be sown in the garden, in the soft and loamy soil. And if ever we are to become like Christ, and to join the

multitude of the redeemed in heaven, we must be in the right place here on earth. "Those that be planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God." The proverb says, "As a bird that wandereth from her nest, so is a man that wandereth from his place." The place for boys and girls is their home, not loitering about the streets at night; they should be found in the house of the Lord on the Sabbath Day, and in the Sunday School should learn to love and trust that Saviour who said, "Suffer the little children to come unto Me."

And then, again, if the young plants in our gardens are to prosper they must be watched and watered, or they will soon droop and fade away. We must watch for those tiny insects, the little green fly, that spoil so many of our most beautiful flowers. And there is the "green fly" of sin, those "little foxes that spoil the blossom"—the early promise and bright hopes of youth. Be like Daniel, watch and guard against the beginnings of sin—the unholy thought, the unclean word, the little deception, the rising temper, the mean act, the petty

pilfering, the first impulse to disobey, the breaking of the Sabbath, the wandering from the house of God.

The blight first attacks weakly plants, hence the importance of constant attention and watering to keep them fresh and strong. Many of our great towns receive water from the lakes among the Welsh mountains. By unseen channels it comes and supplies their need. So, my boys and girls, we may receive the Water of Life from the very hills of God. Along the unseen channel of prayer divine grace and strength will flow into our heart. By daily prayer keep up the connection with Heaven, and then your life shall be "like a watered garden." "Those that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint."

THE WORTH OF A PIN

"For who hath despised the day of small things?" —ZECH. iv. 10.

IN early times pins were much larger than those we now use, and were made of wood, and sometimes of bone or silver.

The pins mentioned in the Bible were made of a hard kind of wood, and were used to fasten together the boards of the Tabernacle, or were knocked into the wall for a peg to hang things upon. The prophet Ezekiel tells us that the vine was of use only to bear fruit, and that if it failed to do that it was worthless; for, said he, you could not even make pins of its wood.

More than four hundred years ago, when Richard III. was king, a law was passed in England that no foreign-made pins—no pins "made in Germany"—were to be

sold, but only those of British make. A little time after this pins were made of metal, of brass wire, but they were so blunt-pointed and the heads were so loose that great complaints were made by the people. That was in the reign of Henry VIII., and an Act of Parliament was passed in 1543, entitled "An Acte for the true making of Pynnes," and it stated that none were to be sold but such as were well pointed and had the heads firmly fastened, and that the price was to be 6s. 8d. per thousand—that is, twelve a penny. England soon became famous for its pins; and there are now more pins made every day than there are people in the whole of England, Wales, Scotland, and Ireland. Now let us notice some of the lessons that even a small pin can teach.

I. The first is this: Don't despise little things. Because a pin is small it is not valued much, and people speak of it in a disdainful way. How often does a boy say, "I don't care a pin!" or if he thinks something is of little value, he exclaims, "It's not worth a pin!" or, "I wouldn't give a pin for it!" Now it is this spirit

of despising little things that leads to defeat and ruin. You remember the story of David and Goliath? How the giant pretended that he could not see David because he was so small. "And when the Philistine looked about and saw David, he disdained him, for he was but a youth." But the lad who was despised slew the mighty giant. And, in like manner, through neglecting little things, even great and good men have been overcome. A dead fly spoils the ointment, and a little folly ruins the reputation of a wise man.

Moreover, a little thing should not be despised, for it may be of the greatest service. On one occasion Jesus was in the wilderness, and there were with Him "five thousand men, besides women and children." They were all hungry, and how could they be fed? There was a little boy there, with "five biscuits and two sardines," and with those little things Jesus fed all the people, the children as well.

"I have heard, Lord Jesus,
That a child like me,
Brought his cakes of barley,
At Thy call to Thee;

And with eyes wide open
By Thy side he stood,
Wond'ring Thou should'st ask him
For such simple food.

From his little bundle
Thou the bread didst take,
And for all the weary
Soon a feast didst make;
No one was forgotten
In that hungry throng,
And their sighs of sadness
Went away in song."

Jesus took care of and used the little things, and it is in the same way that we can succeed. A gentleman occupying a very high position was asked the secret of his success, and he replied, "By mastering details; by being careful of little things." That is so. Lord Wolseley thought out everything, even the smallest, before he won the famous battle of Tel-el-Kebir; and the great victory of Omdurman was the crowning success of the Sirdar's attention to the most trivial details of his long desert march.

A little thing, too, tells tales about our character. One day a merchant wanted a

lad in his office, and, as two smart-looking boys came along the street to seek the situation, the merchant watched them, and he noticed that one of the boys stooped and picked something up. The merchant was pleased with both boys, and hardly knew which one to engage. Then, turning to the lad he had noticed in the street, he asked what it was he had stooped to pick up. "It was a pin, sir, that I saw on the pavement." "That's right, my boy," replied the merchant; "a boy who will take care of so small a thing as a pin will take care of my goods." That little thing got him the situation.

II. Some day we may want the little things we do not value now. Isn't it often so with pins? You pass one by and say, "It's only a pin!" but how soon have you afterwards been in need of a pin? You have gone running from one person to another, eagerly asking, "Has any one a pin?" The despised little thing becomes of value to you then. Dr Moffat, the great African missionary, tells us how often he suffered from thirst, and could get

nothing to drink. At such times, he said, "we thought of the water we once threw away." And so it is with our privileges and blessings. You are young, and largely free from care and trouble, and have good teachers to instruct you; but, if you do not make the most of these things, you will always regret it in after-years. When the Jews were in Jerusalem they often neglected to go into the Temple and worship God, but when they were taken away into captivity where there was no Temple and no worship, how they longed for the privileges they once despised! "By the rivers of Babylon there we sat down; yea, we wept when we remembered Zion." Let your Sundays be well spent; love the Sabbath School; join with those who worship God in His sanctuary, and your life will become an increasing joy and blessing, both to yourself and to others. But if you neglect these things, the time will come when you would give all you possess to have once more the privileges of youth—"you will think of the water you once threw away."

"Strange we never prize the music
Till the sweet-voiced bird has flown!
Strange that we should slight the violets
Till the lovely flowers are gone!
Strange that summer skies and sunshine
Never seem one-half so fair
As when winter's snowy pinions
Shake the white down in the air."

III. Of how little use is a crooked pin. It gives way like a bruised reed when you press it, and you throw it down with disappointment. And is it not sad when boys and girls become crooked? A youth who had been pilfering (taking what was not his) said to me, with tears in his eyes, "Oh, do think of me as you used to think of me before this happened!" It was very sad; he had become like a crooked pin. A father trusts his son, believes him, but one day the father finds him out in a lie. How grieved he is, and, in a voice almost choked with sorrow, he says, "My boy, I cannot trust you now!" Whatever else you miss, be straight. The New Testament word for "truth" means not to hesitate or stop, but to speak straight out; and that is how we should always speak.

"Oh, what a tangled web we weave
When first we practise to deceive."

A poor man once asked a bishop if he could tell him the way to heaven. "Take the first turn to the right," the bishop replied, "and keep straight on." Turn neither to the right hand nor to the left, but keep straight. To *prevaricate* is to straddle—to go from side to side. Don't prevaricate, but go and speak straight. To *exaggerate* is to make heaps, to speak big, to make things appear different from what they are. Don't exaggerate, but walk straight on the level ground of truth!

IV. It is very difficult to straighten a crooked pin, and it is very difficult for a boy or girl who has got into a crooked way of speaking and acting to become truthful and upright. There was once a poor woman who was almost bent double with disease, and she went into the synagogue to worship. Jesus was there and saw her, "and He laid His hands upon her, and she immediately *became straight*, and worshipped God." Jesus could do for the poor woman what she could not do for herself. And so let boys and girls who

have become crooked—whose father and mother cannot trust them—let them pray, and "ask the Saviour to help them" to become straight and true once more. But "Prevention is better than cure." So let all ask Jesus to keep them from becoming like a crooked pin. You remember the story of the boy whose father said that for every wrong thing the boy did he would knock a nail in the door, and soon the door was covered with nails. The father entreated his son to be different, and said, "Now, my boy, when you resist temptation and do a good deed, I will draw one of the nails out of the door." Time went on, and one day the father called his son, and said to him with joy, "Look here, my lad, all the nails are gone." The boy was thoughtful for a moment, and then replied, "Yes, father, but the scars remain." Ah, how much better it is to keep straight, and to have no scars!

"SALT IS GOOD"

"Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men."—MATT. v. 13.

ANCIENT writers speak of salt and sunshine as being the two things which keep the world alive and sweet, while doctors tell us that were it not for the abundance of salt all life would soon perish. Mr Stanley, in his books on African travel, states that the natives would do almost anything to get a little salt, and that a pinch of it put upon the tongue was considered a great treat. In some parts of Western Africa, lumps of salt, weighing about a pound in weight, are used as money. It is of more value than gold.

Among the most treasured possessions

of the American Indians were what they called "salt-licks," that is, large rocks or boulders of salt out on the prairies. To these "salt-licks" the animals came, the buffalo and the deer, to taste the pungent and health-giving flavour, and then the poor creatures were easily trapped or shot down by the Indians, who were hidden from view. Many a battle has been fought by hostile tribes for the possession of these rocks of salt, and they were bravely defended to the last by the Indians against the white man who was trying to get the whole of the land.

There are few things so needful as salt, and God in His mercy has widely scattered it throughout the world. Some seas, such as the Adriatic and several inland seas, are much salter than others, and supply large quantities of this necessary food. Salt is also found deep down in the earth, and in some mines there are beds of it one hundred feet thick. In some parts of Austria there are underground workings thirty miles in length; long tunnels and great halls, with sides and ceilings of salt, and salt only. England, too, is famous

for its salt mines, especially in Cheshire and Worcestershire, where there are also extensive salt-springs. Thousands of tons are sent out from this country to India, America, and other parts.

Salt is one of the most common articles of food, and Jesus generally used homely things to illustrate his teaching. One day an Indian missionary dined with Mr Spurgeon, and during conversation he told the great preacher that the part of India in which he worked was named Patna, where the best rice comes from. "Then," said Mr Spurgeon, "whenever we have rice for dinner we will pray for you." The rice would thus remind Mr Spurgeon of missionary work, and of his promise to pray for his friend. Now are there not some things we might learn from the salt, and when we see it on the table be reminded of thoughts that would help to make us better, and stir us up to more earnest work.

I. First, then, salt reminds us of purity. How beautifully white is the salt we use. When some Africans saw snow for the first time, they called it salt, because it

was so white. In some of the Persian mines the salt is said to be so pure and transparent that you could see through pieces of it two inches in thickness. Salt has always been the emblem of purity and righteousness. One of the rooms of the Jewish Temple was called "the Salt-room," wherein was laid up, at the public charge, an exceedingly large stock of salt, for nothing was allowed to be placed upon the altar unsalted. In Leviticus the law states, "With all thine offerings thou shalt offer salt." Some Rabbins say that even the wood, with which the altar fire was kept burning, had first to be salted. By this use of salt, God would have us learn that all our approaches unto Him, all our thoughts and words and offerings, must be pure. And when we see the white salt on the table, let it remind us that we should be pure and holy, and keep our character white, "unspotted from the world."

In early times when people believed in Christ, and wished to join His Church, they were dressed in white, and were called "candidates." Have you ever

thought what that name means? Why were they called candidates? The word comes from the Latin *candidus* which means white, and so those who confess Christ must be holy, they must be white, like the salt.

St Paul in his letter to Timothy wrote these words, "Keep thyself pure," and it would not be a bad plan to have that text printed round our salt-cellars, that we may pray and strive to be "as pure as salt." The happiest people are the people who are pure. It is sin that robs us of joy and makes us cowards. Guard your heart and lips from every unholy thought and unclean word. Be like the salt, pure and white, and let nothing stain the beauty of your young fair soul; let no sin rob you of manliness and true nobility of character. Remember King Arthur's Knight—

> "His strength was as the strength of ten
> Because his heart was pure."

II. Not only is salt pure in itself, but it helps to purify and preserve other things. We all know how salt is used

to preserve food, and to prevent it becoming tainted. It is salt that keeps the ocean fresh and pure, and makes the air so healthful. When the young men of Jericho told Elisha the prophet that the water was bad and the land unfruitful, he took, we are told, a new cruse of salt, and went forth unto the spring of waters, and cast salt in there, and healed the waters so that there was no more dearth or barren land. Salt was the sign or symbol of the cleansing power of God. You will remember, too, that Jesus said to His disciples, "Ye are the salt of the earth," that is, that by their life and teaching they would help to purify and preserve the world of mankind. The lesson Jesus would have us learn is this, that it is great and holy men, good and brave boys and girls, who keep the world from becoming altogether wrong. Had there been ten righteous men in Sodom it would have been preserved. The people were true to God all the days of Joshua, for his manly conduct was like salt in their midst. The devout life of David, "whose psalms have so often been sung,"

was remembered for many generations, and kept several of his descendants from forsaking God.

We have all heard of Dr Arnold of Rugby and his famous school of boys. The eldest boys were in "the sixth form," and the great teacher spared no pains with them; he taught them to hate all meanness, and to be too honourable to tell a lie. They would, then, he knew, give a healthy tone to the whole school. "If I have confidence in my sixth form," said the Doctor, "I would not exchange my place for the loftiest position in the world." Those elder boys were the salt of the school, and so should we strive to be the salt of the house and of the workroom, the shop and the office. Are you the eldest in the family? Then think of the influence you have over your brothers and sisters. Help to make the home happy, the dwelling-place of contentment and love and peace. Are you an apprentice? Then pray God to help you to be the salt of the office and the workroom, keeping the talk from becoming unclean, and the conduct unholy. One lad, like

Arthur Penrhyn Stanley, has changed the character of a school, and a single apprentice has raised the moral tone of a large place of business. Do not be afraid, even though you be alone, but remember Oded the prophet, and Daniel in the Babylonian court.

III. It is possible for salt to lose its savour, and in that case it is good for nothing, not even to throw upon the land. If we are to be "the salt of the earth," we must see to it that we do not lose our freshness and strength of character. So it becomes a very important question, how may we keep strong and pure and holy.

A famous traveller in Palestine, Mr Maundrell, tells us that he picked up pieces of rock salt which had altogether lost their savour; they had no taste whatever, and easily crumbled to dust. The pieces sparkled and looked like salt, but had not saltness; they were good for nothing. He then went up to the rock itself, and broke a piece off and tasted it, and there was the pungent flavour, the sharp taste, of real salt. The pieces away

from the rock had lost their savour, but that which was connected with it had retained the life-preserving qualities. Does not that teach us how we may keep strong and pure? Be connected with the Rock—the Rock Christ Jesus—by faith, by daily prayer, and meditation upon His Word.

There is nothing that can do this world good like the Gospel of Christ. I once read of an American merchant, who was in a large way of business, and who was asked for a subscription towards building a church. He readily gave £50, and said: "I give that as a good business investment. I would rather give £50 every year than not to have the Gospel preached in this town." "How is that?" he was asked. "You do not pay any heed to the Gospel. Why are you interested in having it preached?" "Oh," he replied, "I live here with my family, and my property is around here; without the influence of religion, the condition of society would soon become such that neither property nor life would be safe. I would not be willing to live in any town where the Gospel was not preached."

Christianity is the salt of the earth. Supposing some morning when you woke up, you found that there were no churches, no Sunday-schools, no preachers, no Christian people, no Gospel, no Sundays, I don't think you would care to stay long in the world. Wickedness would gain the upper hand, and the whole earth would become corrupt, as in the days before the Flood. It is Christian people who are the salt of the earth; they preach the Gospel, and build hospitals and schools, and care for the poor and dying.

Let the white salt which is on the table at almost every meal remind you of these three things—first, be pure yourselves; then help to make others pure; and in order to do so, keep close to the Rock, the true Salt of the World, the Lord Jesus Christ.

LESSONS OF THE LEAVES

"And the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations."—REV. xxii. 2.

"The leaves are not the useless things
They seem to be;
They do not flutter idly on
Hedgerow or tree.
How little think we as we press
Them 'neath our feet,
That they have silently fulfilled
A mission sweet."

OF all the beautiful things in our world there is nothing more beautiful than flowers and the foliage of trees. How beautiful is the spring-time when the naked earth is being clothed in "living green"—

"And all the trees on all the hills
Open their thousand leaves."

And not less beautiful is the autumn when the woods glow with the rich and golden

hues of changing foliage! There is a legend or story that because the leaves had done their work so well, that at the end of summer a goddess came and changed them into the lovely tints and colours of autumn. Yes, the leaves are very beautiful, and very beautiful, too, are the lessons they teach us!

I. How useful are the leaves. What our hands are to us, they are to the trees. They are ever at work, laying hold of air and dew and sunshine, and getting out of them food for the growing plants. Botanists tell us that it is through the work of the leaves that the massive trunk and spreading boughs of the tree are formed. Says a Chinese proverb, "The mightiest rivers are cradled in the leaves," for they are continually sending forth the moisture which the roots drink in from the soil. A tree gives off many gallons of water in twenty-four hours, and a single sunflower plant will give off as much as a quart in the same time. But as the water passes through the plant from the soil, the plant keeps for itself certain food that it finds in the water, and so its framework is built up.

The leaves are not only useful to the plant, but they are useful to us as well, and help to make the earth fertile and beautiful. No matter what their size or shape, whether big or little, broad or narrow, they are all alike in this—they all work, and all help to make the plant strong and fruitful. And so it should be with us. There is a work for boys and girls to do as well as for men and women. We should not say that we must wait until we are older, we should begin now.

I heard a minister say that on one occasion he had to preach in a Yorkshire town, and when he arrived there at the railway station he asked a cabman to drive him to "Ebenezer Chapel." The old cabman said he did not know such a place, so the minister tried to explain where he wanted to go. "Oh," said the old man, "you mean 'Little Charley's Chapel.'" Then he told him how a new chapel had long been needed in the place, but the people being poor, and trade very bad, the committee had given up all idea of building one. Three days after the meeting at which they had decided not to build, a

little boy, nine years old, was seen wheeling his little barrow up the hill towards the minister's house. He had in his barrow six new bricks which he had begged of a builder, so when he got to the house he knocked at the minister's door, and said that he had brought the bricks for a beginning of the new chapel. The minister was greatly moved by the child's faith and work, and at once called the committee together, and there in the room, in the middle of the table, was the little wheelbarrow with its six new bricks. The minister told the story, how the child had begged the bricks, and brought them to begin the chapel. Soon every one present caught the child's enthusiasm, they set to work, and the chapel was built. A few years after, said the old man, the little fellow died, but we old folk always call it "Little Charley's Chapel." Remember then how much a little child can do. Small leaves as well as big leaves are useful, and have some work to do in the building up of the tree. It was little Charley that set the minister and people to work, and soon the chapel was built.

II. How industrious are the leaves. If all the green leaves were to form themselves into a company, and to open a place of business, they might set up the sign, "Starch-Makers to the World." There is a great deal of starch in bread and potatoes and arrowroot and sago, and it helps to make us healthy and strong. The green leaves are very busy, especially when the sun shines, and if we had a powerful microscope we could see the leaves at work, and tiny grains of starch being formed to feed the plants, and afterwards to feed growing boys and girls. But it is in the summer time, in the sunshine, when all this is being done, and if the leaves did not work then there would be little or no wheat, no potatoes, and not only would the plants die, but all of us would soon become thin and starved. The leaves have their time to work, and if they could speak to each other they would say, "Make starch while the sun shines." They teach us a lesson of industry, and to "work while it is called to-day."

The season of youth is the spring-time, the sunshine of our life, and boys and girls

should be working hard and storing their minds with knowledge. One of the greatest orators in the House of Commons was Edmund Burke, and one day after he had delivered a most wonderful speech, a friend found his brother, Richard Burke, somewhat thoughtful and sad. On being questioned as to what was the matter, he replied, "I have been wondering how Ned has contrived to monopolise all the talents of the family; and then again, I remember that when we were at play he was always at work." Like the leaves, he was storing away knowledge in the sunshine of life.

When the great Dr Paley was a young and careless student at college, spending his time in idleness and frivolity, a stray remark by one of his companions led him to work and use the sunshine of youth in study. He afterwards became one of the greatest men of his day, and most people read and talked about "Paley's Evidences of Christianity." Most of our great and good men were industrious while they were young. Says David Wilkie, the famous Scotch painter, "I knew I had no genius,

and that my only hope of doing anything worthy was by being industrious." And those familiar and beautiful paintings of his show how hard he worked and how well he succeeded. And if we are to do anything worthy in life, we must begin now. Use the sunshine of to-day. Like Joseph and Samuel and Daniel, begin to serve God while you are young, and do not put it off until clouds of sin and trouble hide the sunshine from you. If you cannot master the little difficulties that come in your way, how can you expect to overcome greater when you have less time and more cares? Get a good supply of knowledge and of grace and Divine power while you are young.

III. How courteous are the leaves. If they could speak, they would say something like this to us: Boys, be honourable and gentlemanlike! Don't stoop to do anything mean and shabby! And if that is what the leaves would say, they certainly practise what they preach. You know that the leaves require light; they want the sunshine so that they may get on with their work. And if an Alexander were to

ask them, as he asked Diogenes, whom he found lying in the sunshine, "Is there anything I can serve you in?" the leaves would reply in the words of the rough old philosopher, "Only stand a little out of our sunshine." Now this is the point I want you to notice. No leaf keeps the light or sunshine from another leaf. They grow in opposite pairs (see the privet) or like a spiral staircase (see the rose-bush), their chief concern being to let every other leaf get as much of the bright sunshine as possible. "In honour preferring one another." Sometimes boys try to get on by pulling other boys down. If there was anything Dr Arnold hated more than another, it was meanness. He cultivated honour among his boys, and soon Rugby School became the training ground of gentlemen. There was no tale-bearing, no lying, for the good Doctor always trusted and believed them—put them upon their honour—so that the boys began to feel and say, "It's a shame to tell a lie." Let every one have fair play, and do not seek to undermine the influence or hinder the chances of another boy getting on in

your form or class at school. Be courteous always and everywhere. Reverence the aged, and make way for those bearing burdens, always let them have the pavement.

One day in hastily turning the corner of a street in London, a young lady, a magazine tells us, ran with great force against a ragged little beggar boy, and almost knocked him down. Stopping as soon as she could, she turned round and said: "I beg your pardon, my little fellow. I am very sorry that I ran up against you." The poor boy was astonished. He looked at her for a moment in surprise, and then, taking off his cap, he made a bow and said, while a broad sweet smile spread itself over his face, "You can hev my parding, Miss, and welcome; and the next time you run agin me, you may knock me clean down, and I won't say a word." After the lady had passed on, he turned to his companion and said, "I say, Jim, it's the first time I ever had any one ask my parding, and it's a kind o' took me off my feet." The poor lad was moved by the lady's gentle and courteous words. We do

ourselves good by being gentlemanlike and honourable, and certainly we help to make others happier and the world brighter.

IV. Leaves teach us a lesson of hope. The autumn comes, the leaves change colour, but how glorious are the rich tints of the dying leaves. Their mission has been to purify the air, to beautify the earth, and to provide for the needs of life; and we may truly say of them, "They rest from their labours, and their works do follow them."

> "The fallen, withered, dying leaves
> Do not cease to be;
> They suffer change, then live again
> Within the forest tree."

And so it is with our words and actions. The kind word is remembered, the good deed is not lost. How the world has been enriched by the faith of Abraham, the courage of Elijah, the fidelity of Daniel, and the unselfishness of Paul! And not only shall our deeds live on, but we ourselves shall also live again. Jesus says, "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life; who-

soever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die." Boys and girls, put your trust in Christ. Believe in Him as your Saviour, love Him as your Friend, and obey Him as your King.

A BUNCH OF KEYS

"The key of knowledge."—LUKE xi. 52.

FROM earliest times people had to take care of their things by locking them up, and that seems to show that there always were some people ready to take what did not belong to them.

The first time we read of a key is in the Book of Judges, over three thousand years ago. The children of Israel were oppressed by Eglon, King of Moab, and one hot day, while the king was resting in his summer parlour, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, named Ehud, killed the king, and went secretly away, locking the door after him. The servants waited a long time, and still their king did not come, "therefore," we read, "they took a key and opened the door: and, behold, their lord was fallen down dead on the earth." The key they

used was simply a piece of crooked wood, like a sickle, and then, when iron came into use, keys were made of that metal, especially in Egypt, but even to this day locks and keys in Palestine are generally made of wood.

The keys of old English castles and cathedrals are often very large and heavy, measuring a foot in length and weighing nearly a pound. It is most interesting to examine those ancient keys and locks, some of them being exceedingly quaint, and frequently very beautiful. They were made by that old English worker, the white-smith.

Some of you have seen a picture in which a number of men are trying with hammers and chisels to force open a safe—a big iron chest—and steal the money and valuables which are locked up in it. But with all their tools and strength they are unable to break it open, and have to go away without getting at the precious things inside. But the owner of the safe has a small key, no bigger than your little finger, and with it he can quite easily open the heavy door. The little key can do what all the strong

men with chisels and crowbars were unable to do.

A key is therefore the sign or symbol of power. At Hebrew weddings a key was given to the bride as a token that the authority of the house was bestowed upon her. Sometimes when your mother goes out she will hand you her keys, and tell you what to do, and how proud you then feel to be left in charge, and have the keys of all the boxes and cupboards. You feel that you are the little mistress of the house, and that if anything is wanted you must be asked. You possess power because you hold the keys. Have you not sometimes stood outside a castle door or a park gate, begging the man who has the key just to let you go inside? It is the fact of his having the keys that gives him authority and power.

But there are other things in the world besides doors and gates, and boxes and cupboards, and there are other keys of which the keys on this ring are but the sign. Now I want to speak to you about a bunch of keys which every boy and girl should always carry ; keys more wonderful

than those which open heavy doors and iron gates.

I. There is first the key of love. This is what we may call the "master key," for it will open almost every lock. There is no magic key that story-writers have described that is half so wonderful as the key of love. We sometimes read in fairy tales how tall gates and big doors have been opened by the tiniest of keys which the good fairies had given to little girls and boys. That wonderful little key is love. Hardest hearts have been opened by it, and cruel men have been moved to gentleness by its magic touch. Sometimes you see in an advertisement of a machine these words, "Can be worked by a child," and I am sure the same may be said of this wonderful key, for the youngest child can use it very well.

A London lady missioner once told me that she had seen the tears roll down the cheeks of a man who had been in gaol for breaking into a house. What was it that softened the hard heart of the burglar? It was the love of a little child who had climbed up upon his knees and stroked his

face and talked to him about Jesus. The little child had done what men and women, ministers and magistrates, had been unable to do. It had opened with the little key of love the stone-like heart of the house-breaker.

In the year 1346 there reigned in England a king named Edward III. He had taken over his brave soldiers to France, and having won the battle of Crecy, he besieged Calais. The governor of Calais, John de Vienne, was a brave man, and defended the city for nearly a year. But at length the food ran short, and there was a famine. So the governor of the city asked Edward upon what terms he would make peace. The king was vexed at having been kept waiting so long, and he sent word that he would not spare the city unless six of the chief men came before him, bareheaded and barefooted, with halters round their necks, and laid at his feet the keys of the city, and were hanged on a tree. The people wept when they heard these terms, but the brave commander said he would be one of the six, and soon five others volunteered, and they appeared before Edward with

halters round their necks. The hard king said to his soldiers, "Take them to that tree and hang them." Then Queen Philippa fell on her knees and said: "O king, O Edward, O my husband! If you love me, listen to my petition! Grant me my request!" He said: "What is it, my queen? Rise." "No, Edward," she said, "I cannot rise until my request be granted." The pleading voice and tender love of the queen melted the hard heart of the king. "Bring them back," he said, "I pardon them all for the love of my wife." Love is stronger than man, stronger than weapons of war, and history tells us that it was the key of love that opened the hard heart of the warrior king, and made him gentle and forgiving. Let us see to it, girls and boys, that we always carry with us the key of love.

II. Another key we should all possess is the key of knowledge. Although it cannot be bought with money, yet a price has to be paid for it; you must *pay attention* to your school lessons and learn all you can while you are young. "Knowledge is power," said the great Lord Bacon, and

every day we see how much more powerful is the man who knows than the man who does not know. Some men were trying to move a heavy beam of wood into its place, and with all their strength and all their lifting, they were unable to do so. A schoolmaster came up, a man who had studied Euclid and Natural Philosophy, and he said, "Lend me that crowbar," and then holding it in a certain position, and using it as a lever, he at once moved the heavy beam into its place. The man of knowledge was stronger than all the other men put together. Yes, "knowledge is power," and it is a key which opens the door out of many difficulties, and enables its possessor to do very wonderful things.

The highest of all knowledge is the knowledge of God. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." Christ told the Scribes and Pharisees that they had taken away "the key of knowledge," that is, they had kept God's Word from the people, and so, instead of being strong and good, the people had become weak and sinful. Where there is knowledge of God's Word there is strength, and the people who

have this key of knowledge are among the strongest and best the world has ever seen. Such were the three Hebrews who would not bow down to the golden image, and Daniel who would not obey the wicked command of King Darius. The evangelists Peter and John had this key when they stood before the Jewish Council, and so had Paul amid the exciting scenes of the shipwreck. Luther had it when he chanted the forty-sixth Psalm, and so had Cromwell and his brave Ironsides. The key of knowledge not only makes us strong, but it unlocks the treasuries of God. It is

> "The golden key
> That opes the palace of eternity."

Men have been cast into prison, and all their things taken from them, but the prison warders could not take from them the key of knowledge. Although the dungeon has been bare and dark, yet men like Samuel Rutherford, the Scotch divine, and James Montgomery, the sweet hymn-writer, and Thomas Cooper, the Christian Chartist, could unlock the very gates of heaven, and have fellowship with Christ and with the

saints on high. Bernard Palissy, the French Protestant, said to his persecutors, "You can imprison my body, but you cannot imprison my soul." The key of knowledge opened doors that led into the presence of God, and those doors no man could shut. My young friends, study well your Bible, and become possessors of this wonderful key. "Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore, get wisdom, and, with all thy getting, get understanding."

III. There is another key you should carry with you throughout your life. It is a key that God Himself has made, namely, the key of promise. Most of you have read Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress," and you will remember how Christian and Hopeful wandered in By-path Meadow, and were made prisoners by Giant Despair, who cast them into a dark dungeon in Doubting Castle. They were in a sad plight, and were very sorry that they had left the highway of Zion for the pleasant Meadow of Indulgence. Days passed on, and there they were, without food and comfort, afraid lest they should be put to death, when all at once, early one morning, Christian re-

membered that he had a key in his bosom, the key of promise, which he believed would open every door in Doubting Castle. And so it was, for it opened the dungeon door, also the door leading to the castle yard, and the great iron gate next to the road. And soon both Christian and Hopeful were free, thanks to the key of promise. They remembered how God had promised to help them, and God kept His word.

And if ever you are in difficulty use this key, for God gives it to us for that very purpose. When you are tempted, remember that God has said that He "will open a way of escape," so look out for it. When you are in trouble, remember the promise, "Call upon Me in the day of trouble, and I will deliver thee." When you feel lonely and ready to give up, remember God has said, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." And just as the key of promise opened every door in Doubting Castle, so the same key, the promises of God, will help you out of every difficulty or trial throughout the whole journey of your life.

There are other keys I might mention had I time, but these are the three princi-

pal ones—the key of love, the key of knowledge, and the key of promise. If you always carry them with you, and do not forget them as did Christian, but use them day by day, your life will then be a blessing to others, a joy to yourself, and glory to God.

ONLY A DANDELION

"A flower of the field."—Ps. ciii. 15.

"ONLY a dandelion"—that is the remark boys and girls make when they pass the bright golden flower which comes up in the early spring-time. "Only a dandelion," say we, and off we go, without stopping to notice its good qualities or listen to its cheery voice. Some people boast of their Norman blood and high-sounding titles. This despised flower has quite an aristocratic name—"dent-de-lion"—which means the lion's tooth. If you cut one of the green leaves down the middle, and hold the half up to the light, you will see that the outline looks something like the jaw of a lion, with pointed fangs, hence the name dandelion. Notice, too, the shape of the green leaves; they are narrow at the base, and widen

towards the tip—that is, that they should not get in each other's way and keep from them the light. They therefore form a beautiful rosette, out of the middle of which rises what we call the flower, decked in golden robes. Linnæus, the Swedish naturalist, made a floral clock. He could tell the time of day by the opening of different flowers, one of which was the dandelion, for it opens in the morning between five and six, and closes between eight and nine in the evening.

I. The flower of some plants is composed of hundreds of little flowers, all packed closely together. They are called *compositæ*, and it is to this order that the dandelion belongs. Pluck one of the large flowers and examine it. Pull off one of the little spikes of yellow, called florets, and you will find that it is itself a perfect little flower. There are two or three hundred of them in a single dandelion bloom. They grow and thrive by clustering together. If each little flower were alone it would soon die; it could not itself resist the effects of wind and rain and heat. This coming together of little

flowers to form one large flower is very wonderful, and teaches the lesson that "Union is strength."

A naturalist tells us that "a little single moss would be utterly powerless in resisting the influences hostile to its growth and beauty, and would speedily perish." The moss thrives by being together in a clump, and so do the tiny flowers which make the larger golden dandelion.

Jesus said, "Wherever two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst;" and people often go wrong by holding themselves aloof from believers in Christ—by "forsaking the assembling of themselves together." The disciple Thomas missed a great blessing and spent a very miserable week through being absent when Jesus came and stood in the midst of the little company in the "upper room" on the evening of the first Easter Sunday. Many a lad, when he leaves home for the great city, is led into sin simply because he neglects the church and forsakes the company of Christian people. He is solitary, alone, and like the tiny moss or the floret of the dandelion,

he is unable to resist the evil influences around him. One of the best safeguards is association. Malachi the prophet lived in troublous times. Most of the people neglected God and lived sinful lives. But there were a few, "a remnant," who remained faithful. And how did they keep alive their religious life? "Then they that feared the Lord *spake often one to another.*" Boys and girls, the best way to get good and become strong is to attend the Sunday-school, the Bible-class, the Society of Christian Endeavour, the Church of Jesus Christ. One helps the other to do right, and to remain firm against temptation. Wesley has a fine hymn on the words of Ecclesiastes, "Two are better than one," in which he speaks of the advantages of meeting with those who love the Lord.

"Woe to him whose spirits droop,
To him who falls alone!
He has none to lift him up,
To help his weakness on.

Happier we each other keep,
We each other's burdens bear;
Never need our footsteps slip,
Upheld by mutual prayer."

II. The dandelion is a hardy plant, and does its best wherever it grows. It is not like those flowers that require a great deal of care, and will not grow unless brought up in a warm greenhouse. No, wherever its lot is cast there it grows, and makes the place beautiful with its blaze of gold. And I think one of the great lessons it teaches us is to do our best everywhere, and not to complain of difficulties. Look at Joseph. He teaches us the same lesson. Wherever he was—a slave, in Potiphar's house, in prison, on the throne—he served God and did his duty. Men of science tell us that it is by struggling with difficulties and overcoming them that we grow in strength of character and usefulness of life. History is full of examples of how people have risen by battling with disadvantages and obstacles. Pope Adrian VI. was the son of a poor barge-builder, and his poverty was so great that the lad could not afford a candle, so he used to stand, with the book in his hand, in the church porches or at street corners, where lamps were generally kept burning, and read by their light. James Ferguson was the son of a Scotch

labourer, and, being a weakly lad, he was sent to look after the sheep, and while the flock was feeding around him he would spend his time in making models of mills, spinning wheels, and other things, while at night he would look up and measure the distance of star from star by string and beads. This little shepherd boy became a great philosopher and astronomer. He did not complain of his difficulties, but rose to greatness by overcoming them. It is said of a well-known writer that it was his riches that prevented him being a truly great man; but, be that as it may, the fact remains that out of poverty and difficulties have risen many of the noblest names our world possesses.

Herbalists, who gather dandelions for medicinal purposes, prefer those that grow in poor and stony ground, because they are more potent—that is, they are stronger than those that grow in well-tilled gardens. Let us learn from the dandelion to do our best wherever our lot is cast, to make home and school and workshop bright by being cheerful, and by living a good and useful life. People may look down upon us as

we look down upon the dandelion; but just as flowers bloom for God, so let us day by day live unto Him.

> "Honour and shame from no condition rise;
> Act well your part, there all the honour lies."

III. The dandelion has a long root which lodges the plant firmly in the ground. When once it gets a hold, no other plant can turn it out, and considerable effort is required to remove it from the green lawn or gravel path. This persistency is due to the root, which it sends deep into the soil. While we may not care to have dandelions cropping up where they are not wanted, and giving an uncared-for look to our gardens, yet we must admire their persistency, and may learn a lesson of strength and firmness. "The root of the righteous shall never be moved," says the proverb; and if we are to be strong and firm, we must be rooted and grounded in truth. We must do things, not because others do them, but because it is right, and because our minds are made up to be true to God and to His Word. The great authoress, Edna Lyall, tells us that the

hymn, "Dare to be a Daniel!" had helped her to be true, especially the refrain—

"Dare to be a Daniel!
Dare to stand alone!
Dare to have a purpose firm!
Dare to make it known!"

The late J. B. Gough, the eloquent temperance lecturer, told the story of a drummer boy who was asked by the captain to drink a glass of rum. The boy declined, saying, "I am a temperance boy, and do not touch drink." "But you must take some now," said the captain. The boy stood firm. The captain then turned to the major and said, "Our little drummer is afraid to drink; he will never make a soldier." "How is this?" said the major, in a playful manner; "do you refuse to obey orders?" "Sir," said the boy, "I have never refused to obey orders, and have tried to do my duty; but I must refuse to drink rum, for I know it would do me harm." "Then," said the major, in a stern voice, in order to test his sincerity, "I command you to take a drink, and you know it is death to disobey orders!" The little hero,

fixing his eyes on the face of the officer, said: "Sir, my father died a drunkard; and when I entered the army I promised my mother I would not taste a drop of rum, and I mean to keep my promise. I am sorry to disobey your orders, sir, but I would rather suffer anything than disgrace my mother and break my pledge." Brave lad! he was well rooted and firm. He had learned to say no, and to stand by it. The officers honoured the boy for his courage and fidelity, and always respected him.

Not only does the root of the dandelion firmly fix it in the ground, but it takes in the moisture and food which make the plant fresh and strong, even in the hottest weather and most unlikely places. So has it been with great and good men. They have by prayer and meditation become strong for their daily work, and strong to resist temptation. General Havelock spent an hour in the early morning with God, and this he did even during the war in India. "The more work I have to do, the more time must I give to prayer," said Martin Luther. Yes, our life must be rooted in God, for God is the source

of real strength. "The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree," which grows in the hot arid sand. Whence does the tree get its strength? Why, like the dandelion, it sends its roots deep down beneath the scorching sand, and taps the cool fresh waters beneath. So, boys and girls, if we are to be strong and true, brave and good, we must do the same. Our life must be "hid with Christ in God." We must get beneath the surface of things, and keep in close touch with God by the daily reading of His Word, and by daily prayer to Him.

THE THREAD OF HABIT

"And, as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day."—LUKE iv. 16.

HABIT is something like appetite: we are led by it, just as a hungry man makes his way towards home. It cannot be explained how it is that actions become easier by being repeated, but that it is so everybody must admit. If we do anything a certain number of times, the doing has an effect upon us, and that effect we call "habit." We should therefore be very careful what we accustom ourselves to do, lest we should acquire the appetite or habit of doing things that are hurtful and wrong. Habit is the result of repeated acts, and it is wonderful how soon a little child acquires a habit. The doing of a thing once or twice is sufficient to lead the child to do it again.

"All habits gather, by unseen degrees,
As brooks make rivers, rivers run to seas."

The growth and power of habit might be illustrated by means of these pieces of thread and twine and cord. You see how easily the thread may be broken, and it is the same with habit. When first formed, you may easily break yourself off it. But it is a far more difficult matter to break the twine, more strength and energy is required to do so, and in like manner you will find it harder to break away from a habit which you have allowed to grow. Now let me try to break the cord, and you will see however much I endeavour to do so, although I use all the strength I possess, it is impossible for me to break it, and so strong does habit become that people who are bound by it find that they are utterly unable to liberate themselves from it.

It is in this way that habit becomes a great power, a kind of second nature, and we are all under its influence, either for evil or for good. How important it is to get this great force working for our advantage, helping to make us brave and true, and storing our life with lasting joys. An evil

habit, says a great writer, is a worse plague than ever afflicted Egypt, while a good habit is one of the greatest blessings we can possibly possess.

> "How shall I a habit break?
> As you did that habit make."

And the sooner we break away from an evil habit the better.

One of the things that spoil our life and hinder us in building up a good and noble character is DISOBEDIENCE. This habit is formed by not going when you are called, and by not doing what you are told. No boy, I am sure, likes at first to disobey his mother; he feels very uncomfortable about it, and wishes he had not done so. The thread may easily be broken, and so may this habit at its beginning; but the boy yields again and again to temptation and disobeys, and soon he finds himself bound as with a strong cord—the habit of disobedience has laid fast hold of him, and made him its captive. God has no place for the disobedient in His service. In the First Book of Kings there is an account of a prophet whom the Lord sent on an errand.

He was in many respects a good man, but he disobeyed God and came to an untimely end. "A lion met him by the way and slew him." And St Peter tells us that Satan "like a roaring lion goeth about seeking whom he may devour," and the disobedient are the first that he springs upon and makes captive.

Many a soldier has been dismissed from the service of his Queen and country because of disobedience, and the Bible includes those who disobey God among the worst of sinners. How necessary it is that we should be on guard against this habit, and if it has gained any power over us we should break away from it as quickly as possible. Our home is a training school for the forming of habit and the making of character. "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for that is right;" it is the right thing to do, and will help you to do right all through your life. Sir Henry Havelock-Allen, who died recently in India, was said to be the bravest soldier in the British army. Well, when a boy, nothing would tempt him to disobey his father. Begin at once to form the habit of obedience, which

is, as Carlyle tells us, our first and highest duty.

Sometimes children, who have great ability, almost fail in their work because they WILL NOT APPLY THEMSELVES to their daily task. They get into the habit of skimming over their lessons, and, like a butterfly, pass from one thing to another without properly finishing anything. This is a most injurious habit, and should be broken while it is like the thread, if not it will prevent you prospering in life or becoming strong in character. "This one thing I do," said St Paul, and no one did more successful work than did the apostle. Nothing good can be done, nothing worth the having can be obtained, without being in earnest and keeping at your work.

You remember the fable of the young monkey that found a nut and had not patience to crack it, but took it to an old monkey to break it for him. This the old monkey did, and quickly ate the kernel; then, turning to the young one, he gave this piece of good advice: "My son, you can get nothing good in this world without

hard work." Break the thread of dreamy, dawdling ways and be earnest!

How many children spoil themselves by PEEVISHNESS! They so soon get cross and lose their temper. Home, instead of being the dwelling-place of contentment and joy, becomes more like a dog-kennel, through children snapping and snarling at each other. It is wonderful how soon this unpleasant habit is formed, and unless restrained, it robs life of all its happiness, and you grow up cross and irritable. Now, while you are young, break the thread! be pleasant and kind towards others, and cultivate the habit of cheerfulness.

There was once an officer in the army who was notorious for his ill-natured behaviour, he was a regular "cross-sticks," and no one liked him. One day the chaplain preached about being kind and cheerful, and how we should try and control our temper and be pleasant. The next day the officer told the chaplain that he could not help being cross, it was his natural disposition to be so, and in that way he tried to excuse himself. On the following Sunday the chaplain again preached against being

cross and churlish, and said: "Perhaps some of you may say that you cannot help being irritable and cross. Now," said he, "I will put this question to you, Would you be cross and give way to temper in the presence of the Queen? Of course you would not. So remember, when you are about to get cross, that you are in the presence of One greater than the Queen, you are in the presence of the King of kings and Lord of lords." The officer afterwards thanked the chaplain for his sermon, and it led to his breaking away from a habit which not only robbed him of joy, but which made others unhappy as well. Whenever we are tempted to give way to temper, let us, too, remember that we are in the presence of God.

Not only must we strive to break ourselves of bad habits, but we must be anxious to FORM GOOD ONES. We read in the Book of Exodus that the "pillar of cloud" was darkness to the Egyptians, but gave light to the children of Israel. Habit is like the "pillar of cloud," it is either a blessing or a curse; to those who live in sin it binds them to their sin, while to those

who want to do good it helps them to do good.

How many fail because they are giddy and thoughtless, and do not cultivate the habit of being PREPARED AND READY. Over the door of a doctor's surgery there are these words, *Nunquam non paratus*, which is one way of saying, "Always ready." That should be so, not only with doctors, but with all of us. It has been said of one of our famous preachers that the secret of his great work and marvellous success is his habit of being ready a quarter of an hour before time. The five "wise virgins" had thought about the oil, and were ready when the Bridegroom came, while the thoughtless virgins were all in a hurry and too late.

In English history you read that one of the Saxon kings was nicknamed "Unready," that is, he was thoughtless, unprepared, and although his reign was the longest in the Saxon line of kings, yet he did little or no good, but brought many evils upon his distracted country. It is a poor excuse to say, "I did not think," that is just what you should have done. You must begin in time.

Morning is the preparation time for the day, so be at your work early. Take time by the forelock.

> "This morning, like the spirit of the youth
> That means to be of note, begins betimes."

Youth is the school of manhood, and life the training ground of eternity. What will avail all other things if thou hast neglected the prophet's words, "Prepare to meet thy God!"

One way of becoming prepared is to make use of all the HELPS God has provided for you. There is the Sabbath Day with its Sunday-schools and worship. Get the habit of attending both school and service, and soon you will find it difficult to keep away. Habit will then become a help to you to do right, just as it leads others into greater sin, for it has been truly said that where there are bad habits a slight temptation overcomes good resolutions. We read of Jesus, "And as His custom was He went into the Synagogue on the Sabbath day." It was Christ's habit during all those early years at Nazareth to attend the services of God's house, and "He has left us

an example that we should follow in His steps."

These habits of thought and industry and religion will grow upon you, and from being faithful in little things you will become faithful in great things. Daniel did not fear the "lions' den" when a man, because he was brave and true when a boy. The thread of early life became the strong cord of manhood.

May good habits bind up thy soul "in the bundle of life with the Lord thy God."

"Holy habits are thy wealth,
Golden pleasant chains,
Passing earth's prime blessing—health,
Endless priceless gains.

Holy habits are thy joy,
Wisdom's pleasant ways,
Yielding good without alloy,
Lengthening, too, thy days."

A BEAUTIFUL BOUQUET

"The flowers appear on the earth."—SOLOMON'S SONG ii. 12.

IN London there is a Flower Mission which, it is needless to say, is conducted by Christian people; for where there is the love of Christ in the heart, there will be the doing of lovely deeds in the life. The object of the Mission is to send flowers to the houses of the poor, especially to those who are sick and unable to get away from the back streets and narrow courts of that great city.

The flowers are made into small nosegays, to each of which is fastened a pretty Scripture text-card; and while the flowers brighten the face of the poor invalid, it often happens that the text of Scripture comforts and gladdens the weary heart.

Now I wish to adopt a similar plan in this short address upon flowers; and if, as our great poet writes, we may "find tongues in trees," I am sure the flowers will have some sweet things to tell us.

I. Here is some *mignonette*, and it says, "Goodness is better than fine looks." Fastened to it is this text, "Do good unto all" (Gal. vi. 10). Mignonette can never be the splendid rose, the gay gladiolus, or the regal sunflower, but the world would be much poorer without it, and our gardens would lose one of their great attractions. The Gospels which tell us of Jesus, say nothing about His appearance, as to whether He was dark or fair; they say little or nothing about the colour or style of His dress. No. There is something far better than looks and dress; it is the disposition, the spirit, the life; and it is about these things that the Gospels speak, how that Jesus was kind and gentle, and "went about doing good."

You have heard the story of that young girl who lived with her father in the lonely lighthouse near to the mouth of the

Tweed. She did not wait till things were different, but one dark stormy night she saved nine lives from a watery grave, and the whole world honoured the good and noble deed of Grace Darling.

Here is another beautiful story which will help you to see how in little lowly things which can be done every day, we may best show the spirit of Jesus, and do His work. A poor hard-working woman, whose children were dead, but who still had a mother's heart, was one day walking down a street near to where poor children lived. She had often seen them playing and running about without shoes and stockings, and as she walked along she saw something bright on the pavement, and quickly stooping, picked it up, and put it in her apron. A policeman saw her, and called out: "Here, my woman, what is that you have picked up and hidden in your apron? Something valuable, I suppose—a brooch or a watch—come now and let me see." The poor woman tremblingly opened her apron, and the policeman was surprised to see only a few bits of broken glass. "What

made you," he crossly asked, "pick up this rubbish?" "Why, sir," she replied—

"I live hard by: I know the throng
Of boys and girls here in the street,
Who, in their happy heedless way,
With shout and laughter race along,
Unmindful of their naked feet.
And as I walked the path to-day—
The broken glass lay shining there—
I thought of children racing by,
Their little feet all brown and bare,
And heard the sudden, startled cry,
As the cruel glass cut painfully.
To save such little ones from pain,
From cut and maimed and bleeding feet,
And not from any hope of gain,
I picked the glass up from the street,
To bear it to some safer spot.
See here, sir, it is all I've got!"

Now could anything be more like Jesus than the thoughtful loving act of that poor woman? Tears of sympathy and love would stand in angels' eyes as they looked on. It was only a little thing to do, but oh, how Christlike! And it is these "little deeds of kindness" which make the world happier and our lives better. We may not have grand clothes and fine feathers, but

the mignonette tells us that "Goodness is better than fine looks."

II. Here are some pansies. Have they another name? Yes, "heart's-ease." Have you ever thought why they were called that beautiful name? It may have been because the pansy has a broad open face; it never closes its leaves like many other flowers, but whether the wind blows or the rain falls, or the sun shoots forth its piercing rays—throughout the dark night as well as the bright day—there is the broad open face of the pansy, and it seems to say, "God put me here, and I can trust Him." Its *heart* is at *ease*. What a lesson of trustfulness! Fastened to the pansies I find this text, "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart" (Prov. iii. 5).

Here is a good story, told by an American preacher. One day at the Sunday-school the lesson had been about Elijah and the chariot of fire. After school two little boys were heard talking in this fashion: "I say, Charley," said George, "but wouldn't you be afraid to ride in such a chariot?" "Why, no," replied Charley, "I shouldn't be afraid, if

I knew that the Lord was driving." Ah! that's it. We need not be afraid. God will take care of us. Say with David, "O Lord God, Thou art my trust from my youth!"

The other day I saw a calendar for 1899. It was a floral picture, there being upon it twelve large and beautiful pansies. Under each pansy, which could be lifted up, there were the dates of one of the months of the year, so that under the twelve there were the whole twelve months. The year was hidden by pansies. And I thought, the future is hidden from us. We know not what shall be on the morrow. But we know that God will take care of us, and we need not therefore be afraid. So over the future lay the pansy—the *heart's-ease;* yes, let the heart be at ease.

When people speak against the Bible, and try to turn you away from God, you must just go on trusting God's promise and His loving care. Plutarch tells us that when Alexander the Great was in Asia, he was taken seriously ill, and some one wrote him a letter stating that his physician had been bribed by the Persians

to give him poison in his medicine. Alexander put the letter under his pillow, and when the physician came in bringing the cup which contained the medicine, the king at once took the cup and quickly drank the medicine, and then he handed to the physician the letter he had received. The physician was most angry that any one should have said such a thing of him, for he himself would rather die than do anything to injure the king who trusted him. Alexander then told him that nothing that people might say would cause him to doubt his honour and goodness; that he had every confidence in him as his physician, and would drink his medicine though people might say it was poison. What faith and trust the king had in his doctor! So, boys and girls, let us trust God in the same way, and never let people cause us to doubt the Bible, or God's love and care. Be like the pansy! Let your heart be at ease!

III. Here is the queen of flowers, and fastened to these beautiful roses I find this text, "A new commandment I give

unto you, That ye love one another" (John xiii. 34). How fragrant is the rose!

> "You may break, you may shatter, the vase, if you will,
> But the scent of the roses will hang round it still."

Now, like the fragrance of the rose is the fragrance of love. St Paul tells us that the love of the Philippians was "an odour of a sweet smell." There were two young Greeks named Damon and Pythias. When Damon was sentenced to death by Dionysius the Tyrant, Pythias begged to die in the place of his friend. This love for each other softened even the hard heart of the tyrant, and he allowed both to live, and desired to share their friendship. The Greeks never tired speaking of the love of those young men. Cicero, the Roman orator, wrote about it three hundred years afterwards, and here, to-day, we are thinking of that deed of love which took place over two thousand years ago. How lasting is the fragrance of love, the memory of a loving deed! Pythias was ready to die for his friend, but Jesus died

for His enemies. "While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." He gave Himself for us. Love is the opposite of selfishness. The rose does not keep its sweet scent all to itself, but sends it forth, making fragrant the whole room and garden; so if there is love in our heart, we shall not keep good things all to ourselves, but shall be ready to share them with others. Jesus "emptied Himself" of the glory of Heaven to save you and me. Was ever love like His? Nearly all the hymn-writers sing of the fragrance of the name of Jesus.

> "Thy name, as precious ointment shed,
> Delights the Church around;
> Sweetly the sacred odours spread
> Through all Immanuel's ground."

It is related of St John the Divine that when he was old and weak, and lay upon his death-bed, his friends gathered round him that they might listen to his last words of wisdom and counsel. He lifted himself up, and repeated again and again, "Little children, love one another." And when, hoping that he might have said

other things, which, perhaps, they would have treasured more eagerly, they asked if he had nothing else to tell them, he answered: "There is no need for more; for love includes all. Fulfil this law: Love one another." It is love that will make your life sweet and fragrant like the rose.

IV. But what are these glossy, tinted flowers? They are called *everlasting flowers*, and fastened to them is this text, "Hope to the end" (1 Pet i. 13). These flowers remain with us all through the cold days and dark nights of winter. When other flowers are gone, these continue with us to cheer the room and gladden the heart. This is the emblem of Christian hope. All other hopes disappoint and fade and die, but the hope which we have in Christ never dies; it is with us at all times, smoothing the rough path of life, and brightening the dark valley, for the "righteous hath hope in his death." A poor lame boy who could only creep about, heard a lady pitying him. "Poor boy," she said, "what a life to lead! What has he in all the future to look forward to!" Tears stood

in the lad's eyes, but quickly brushing them aside, his face lighted up as he replied, "I am looking forward to having wings some day, lady." What a joy that beautiful hope was to the poor little cripple! All his lameness, all his weakness, all his poverty for ever gone, and he to become like the angels that dwell in the presence of God. Ah! that is a beautiful hope; have you got it, my dear children? Jesus Christ has come to give you this hope, and if you look to Him as your Saviour, and obey Him as your King, then you will dwell with Him for ever, where the flowers never fade.

V. Now let me bring together the flowers about which we have been speaking. Here they are—mignonette, pansies, roses, and everlasting flowers. You see they make quite a beautiful bouquet. And, in like manner, if you bring together in your life the things to which we have referred, namely, goodness, trustfulness, love, and hope, then there will be a daily beauty in your life, like the beauty of flowers, making your home bright, and filling it with the sweet fragrance of love.

THE LIGHTHOUSE OF LIFE

"Among whom ye shine as lights in the world."
—PHIL. ii. 15.

THE story of the men who built our lighthouses is full of daring adventure and noble deeds. Every boy and girl has heard of the Inchcape Rock and its warning bell, and how the pirate, Sir Ralph the Rover, cut away the bell, which "sunk with a gurgling sound," and soon afterwards his own vessel struck the rock and sank beneath the waves. On that Bell Rock Robert Stevenson built his famous lighthouse in 1811.

But the most wonderful story of all is that of the men who built the lighthouses on the Eddystone Rock which lies partly hidden by the waves, about fourteen miles to the south-west of Plymouth. Many a vessel that had safely weathered the storms

of the Atlantic became a wreck on this dangerous reef of rocks. In 1696, Henry Winstanley built a lighthouse there, but in the night of 28th November 1703 a terrible storm washed it all away, and poor Winstanley as well. The next was erected by John Rudyard and completed in 1709. It was strongly built, almost entirely of wood, and for nearly fifty years its friendly warning light beamed over the troubled waters, but on the 2nd of December 1755 it caught fire, and in eight hours all was gone. Then was commenced the famous lighthouse built by John Smeaton, which for over one hundred and twenty years pointed out the sunken crags, and shone forth a warning light to vessels entering the English Channel. Smeaton's lighthouse, which now stands on Plymouth Hoe, was the strongest of them all, and had to be taken down only because the rock beneath it had been undermined by the sea waves.

I. One of the first things Smeaton had to decide was the shape of his lighthouse, and how it might best withstand the terrible pressure of the waves that beat

upon and dash over the Eddystone Rocks. He looked about him, and he saw the oak trees, giants of the forests, trees that are said to have weathered the storms of a thousand years.

"The monarch oak, the patriarch of trees,
Shoots rising up, and spreads by slow degrees;
Three centuries he grows, and three he stays
Supreme in state, and in three more decays.'

God is the great Architect, and men must learn of Him. The dome of the grand cathedrals is a copy of the dome of the heavens above us, and it was from the forests, from the groves and avenues of trees, that men learned to build Gothic churches, with their columns, pillars, and arches.

And so Smeaton thought that as the tough oak tree withstands the storms of centuries, he had better build his lighthouse after God's pattern, and he therefore made it, as you see from the model, like the bole or trunk of a tree. St Paul says, "We are to shine as lights in the world," that is, we are to be like lighthouses, and the question arises, What shall be our

pattern? how shall we build the lighthouse of our life? Smeaton got his copy from God, and let us do the same; let us imitate the Divine Son of God, for "He has left us an example that we should follow in His steps."

Some time ago, when walking through the Zoological Gardens in London, I saw a number of students painting lions and tigers from life. And I noticed how the young artists kept looking at the animals, and little by little, touch by touch, they were making a copy upon the canvas. Now it is in that way we are to imitate Christ, to keep looking at Him, and day by day to copy His life. See how obedient was Jesus Christ. He teaches all of us the lesson of filial piety. The only acts recorded of Christ's childhood are acts of obedience. When in the Temple talking with the doctors He was obeying God. "Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business?" And we read that when He went to Nazareth with His parents "He was subject unto them." That is the pattern to imitate. Build the lighthouse of your life after the manner

of Jesus Christ. Learn of Him to be obedient. "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for that is right."

A merchant wanted a boy in his establishment, and quite a crowd of applicants appeared. He therefore inserted this advertisement to sift them: "Wanted—a boy who always obeys his mother." The next day only two lads appeared for the place. Boys and girls, be among that number who honour and obey their parents.

II. A lighthouse must be strong and *firm*. So when Smeaton built Eddystone Lighthouse he made it solid for a good distance out of the water, that it might resist the power of the storms and waves. It is when the wind blows a gale, and the billows of the sea roll high, that sailors need a guiding light; and if at such a time the lighthouse gave way and its lamp went out, ships would be wrecked and many precious lives lost. Lighthouses must be firm if they are to be of use. And boys and girls must be the same. It was said of Reuben, the eldest son of Jacob, "Unstable as water, thou shalt not excel." He was easily led, and just as water takes the

shape of any basin, glass, or jug into which it may be poured, so Reuben, and those like him, are inflenced and led by the company in which they may be found. They have no character of their own, no firmness; they cannot say, "No." Read your Bible and you will find that there was no great prophet or warrior of the tribe of Reuben, and that, as a people, they were the first to be carried away into captivity. They would resolve to do great things, but did not keep their resolutions; their "goodness was as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it passed away."

How different were the three Hebrews in the time of Daniel! What a noble reply they made to the mighty monarch of Babylon! "God, whom we serve, is able," said they, "to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us out of thy hand, O king! But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up." That is the stuff of which true men are made. They would stand firm at the post of right and duty, even in the face of death.

When the city of Pompeii was overwhelmed by the burning lava from Mount Vesuvius, the people rushed out of the theatres and homes to make their escape, but a Roman soldier who had been commanded to stand at the door of one of the public buildings remained at his post. No danger, not even death itself, could tempt him to flee, but there he stood faithful to the sense of duty, and there he died.

In Roman story we read of an ambassador who was tempted by gold to betray his country, and when that failed to move him, they thought they could frighten him into doing it: a great elephant was made to rush into the room where he was, but the ambassador said to the king, "Neither your gold yesterday, nor your beast to-day, has made any impression upon me." Be like that brave Roman! Neither be enticed nor frightened into doing wrong. Be firm like a lighthouse!

"I like to hear, where'er I go,
A young man's brave determined No!
A hero's soul must throb below
The heart that bravely answers No!"

III. A lighthouse is of no use in the dark, unless from it the light shines forth across the waters. The electric lamps at St Catherine's Lighthouse, on the coast of the Isle of Wight, have been furnishing a light which is equal to that given by fifty thousand candles, and they send their welcome rays far out at sea. By its friendly light sailors are able to steer clear of dangerous rocks and treacherous sandbanks. Around the British coasts there are hundreds of such lights shining every night, and all the dangerous parts are pointed out. Also by the aid of coloured glass, some lighthouses are able to cover sandbanks with a red light, so that vessels may be kept away from the shallows.

A sad wreck recently occurred off the bleak island of Socotra, in the Indian Ocean, near to the Red Sea. A splendid English steamer, the "Aden," ran ashore, and nearly all the crew and passengers were lost. It is now recommended that a lighthouse be built on the island in order that other ships may not become wrecks.

Many years ago there were cruel men, called "wreckers," and on dark and stormy

nights they would try and mislead sailors; they would swing a lantern in the hand, or fasten it to the tail of a horse and lead it along the shore. Sailors far away at sea, noticing the swinging lights, thought they were on ships, and that no rocks or dangerous coasts were near, but, alas! misled by the "wreckers," their vessels ran ashore and were plundered by the hard-hearted men.

There is nothing more sad than to lead others astray. Be like the lighthouses that point out the dangers. One winter's day a footpath had become very slippery, and a little boy nearly fell down. He saw some people coming that way, so the little fellow waited and pointed out the slippery place, and told the people not to walk upon it. That is what we should do.

But a lighthouse not only points out dangers, it also guides and directs ships safely into harbour. You may have noticed, when staying in North Wales, a lighthouse on the coast of Anglesea, just above Beaumaris, and another floating light near Priestholme, or Puffin Island, as it is now called. Between these two lights vessels

can sail safely into the Menai Straits or to Bangor. It was near this spot, close to Puffin Island, that the ill-fated steamer "Rothesay Castle" was wrecked, 17th August 1831, when one hundred and thirty passengers were drowned. But now, even on darkest nights, vessels may be guided along a clearly marked channel, and escape the cruel rocks that would gore their sides "like the horns of an angry bull."

One night the keeper of a lighthouse on a dangerous coast was taken ill, and could not attend to the light. The machinery became disordered, and the light failed to revolve. A storm was raging, and the keeper's boy, a mere lad, climbed up to the lamp, and during all the long hours of that terrible night turned with his own hand the lantern. In the morning it was learned that two vessels with seven hundred souls on board had been able to make the harbour by the aid of the revolving light that had been kept in motion by the often-tired but ever-vigilant boy. Unconsciously the faithful lad had been the means of saving hundreds of lives, simply because he had kept the light where it

could be seen. "Let your light so shine before men that they may behold your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."

"Jesus bids us shine with a pure clear light,
Like a little candle burning in the night;
In this world of darkness we must shine,
You in your small corner and I in mine.

Jesus bids us shine first of all for Him,
Well He sees and knows if our light is dim;
He looks down from heaven to see us shine,
You in your small corner and I in mine.

Jesus bids us shine then to all around,
Many kinds of darkness in this world abound;
Sin and want and sorrow—so we must shine,
You in your small corner and I in mine."

WHO SHALL BE TENANT?

"Behold, I stand at the door and knock."—REV. iii. 20.

SOMETIMES you see in a window a paper with these words, THIS HOUSE TO LET. It is better, in a general way, to have some one living in a house than for it to be empty. But there are some people who do a great deal of harm to houses. They will even break off cupboard doors and pull down the stairs to get wood for lighting the fire, and the owner says, "I would much rather have my house empty than let such bad tenants spoil it."

Every boy and girl is like a house, and there might be hung round your neck a card, "This House to Let." Yes, you are to let, and there are many who want to come and live with you, and to remain always in your life-house.

I. Here comes one who wants to be your tenant. He is a slouching fellow, stands at street corners, and generally has his hands deep down in his pockets. You ask his name. "My name is IDLENESS," he replies. Now, before you accept a tenant, you want to know something about him, and so you make a few inquiries.

Solomon tells you that Idleness is a sleepy, wasteful, good-for-nothing, while St Paul gives him a very bad character for tattling and mischief-making. You will never be happy with Idleness in your house. It is those who have something to do, who are busy at their work, that are the freest from sadness.

You know that St Thomas had doubts about Christ, and there is a story which tells us that after he had seen his risen Lord he again had doubts. So he went to the apostles and told them, but they were so busy that they had no time to listen to his tale. Then he went to the devout women to pour out to them his tale of woes, but they, like Dorcas, had little time for such thoughts. At last it dawned upon St Thomas that it was because they were

so busy that they were free from the doubts which tormented him. He therefore resolved to work, and he went and preached the Gospel in Asia Minor and far away in India, and it is said that he was never again troubled with doubts.

If you would be useful, if you would be truly happy, do not let Idleness come and live in your house.

II. Here comes another who wants to know if you will let him be your tenant. He is thin, queer-looking, and has green eyes. His name is ENVY. But before you let Envy into your life, you had better ask about his character, and how he treated other houses in which he once dwelt. It was Envy that spoiled Cain and made him kill his brother Abel. Envy led ten of the sons of Jacob to put Joseph into a pit, and then to sell him as a slave. It was Envy which was among the people outside Pilate's Judgment Hall, and he told them to cry out for Christ's death. It was Envy who first cried out, "Crucify Him," and he kept doing so until all the people said the same, "Crucify Him." Envy has an awful character, and you must certainly not let

him come into your house. St James writes, "Where envying is, there is confusion and every evil work."

The Greeks once set up a statue to one of their heroes. But through Envy, another Greek tried to pull the statue down. He would go at night when it was dark, and scratch away the cement that held the blocks of stone together, for he wanted to destroy this monument. One night, however, while he was pulling at the stones, the whole statue fell, and in its fall it crushed him to death. Have nothing to do with Envy.

III. Who is this coming with his head up, and stalks along as if the whole street belonged to him? He stops at your door and wants to come in. You timidly ask his name. "My name is PRIDE," he replies, "and I should like to live in your house." Before admitting him, put to him a few questions. "Did you ever live in the palace of a great king named Nebuchadnezzar, and was it not through you, Pride, that he was driven from his kingly throne, and became like the beasts of the field? Did you not lead a great Persian states-

man, named Haman, to try and kill Mordecai, a poor godly Jew, and was it not through you, Pride, that Haman was hanged on a gallows? Did you not entice a king, named Herod, to put on a glittering robe, and to make believe that he was a god, and was it not through you, Pride, that he committed that grievous sin, and died a miserable death?" To such questions he replies in an off-hand manner, and tries to throw dust in your eyes by saying, "Well, you see, that was long ago, and they were great men, but you will not find me like that now."

But you remember how Pride causes people to be unkind, and to get into debt, and to become miserable, and so you tell him that you can have nothing to do with him, especially as you read in a book that gives advice about tenants, "I hate pride, saith the Lord."

IV. There are many who want to come and live in your life-house, and you have plenty of applications. Here comes a stout, red-faced man, who speaks to you in a rollicking sort of way—"I say, I hear your house is to let, and I want to come and live

in it." In reply to your questions he tells you his name is STRONG DRINK, and that he is a very cheerful fellow, and drives away care and sorrow. But you tell him that actions speak louder than words, and that a tree is known by its fruit; that instead of removing troubles Strong Drink only increases them; and that many a house, yea, many rows of houses, have been made poor and wretched through Strong Drink.

The wise man, in the book about tenants, says of it, "Strong Drink is a brawler," a disturber, an insolent fellow, and that only the foolish are deceived by it; while the great poet laments, "Oh, that men should put an enemy in their mouths to steal away their brains!" Have nothing to do with Strong Drink!

V. Some one must occupy your house, and as it is the only life-house you possess, you must be very careful. Now I want you to let Jesus Christ come in and live with you. Jesus sometimes comes at night and knocks at people's doors. They would not let Him come in during the day, and at night—when they are old and the day

of life nearly gone—the loving Saviour comes again and knocks. But to boys and girls, Jesus comes in the morning, when all is bright and beautiful, and the day of life only just begun. Young people often think that if they let Jesus come into their life, all the rippling laughter and fun of youth will be gone. No such thing. A greater mistake was never made.

A gentleman once gave a little girl half a crown, all for herself. The child asked her mother if she might buy some groceries with the money, and take them to a poor old widow who lived close by. The mother was very pleased that her little girl thought of the poor, and at once gave the child her consent to make the purchases. It was a real pleasure to buy tea and sugar and other things, but the greatest pleasure would be to see the surprised and delighted face of the poor widow. With quick steps, almost running, the child hastened to the widow's home, and nearly hurt her knuckles with knocking at the door. But no one came. Again and again the child knocked, and still no one answered the door. The little girl was greatly disappointed, and, with

tears in her eyes, she told her mother how she had knocked and knocked but could make no one hear.

The mother comforted the child and promised to go with her. So the next morning the mother and child went to the house, but they had no need to knock, for the widow saw them from the window, and at once opened the door. Then the child spoke of her fruitless errand the day before, and how disappointed she had been. Whereupon the widow said: "O my child, I did not think it was you knocking. I thought it was the man calling for the rent, and as I had no money, I did not answer the door."

There you see, there was at that widow's door a little friend with good things for her, but she thought it was some one coming to fetch something away.

Now that is, as I have said, how boys and girls often act in regard to Jesus Christ. He knocks at the door and wants to come in, but they think that Jesus would take away their pleasures, whereas He wants to bring into the heart the greatest blessings of life.

"I bring thee joy from heaven above,
I bring thee pardon, peace, and love;
Say, weary heart, opprest with sin,
May I come in? May I come in?

Behold Me standing at the door,
And hear Me pleading evermore
With gentle voice: Oh, heart of sin,
May I come in? May I come in?"

Do not let Christ stand waiting outside any longer, but fling wide open the door of your heart and let the gentle Saviour come and abide with you. His presence will be a continual blessing. He will add a smile to your face, a kindly tone to your voice, and a willingness to your hands and feet to run on errands of love and to try and make others happy. And in doing that you will become the happiest of all. You will enjoy your games, your cricket, your cycling all the more because Jesus lives in your life-house.

There was a good Christian minister named Charles Kingsley, and his home, which was the Rectory at Eversley, was a very happy place, for the children had been taught to love Jesus, and in loving Him they had found true happiness. They de-

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